THE SCIENCE OF SPIRIT POSSESSION

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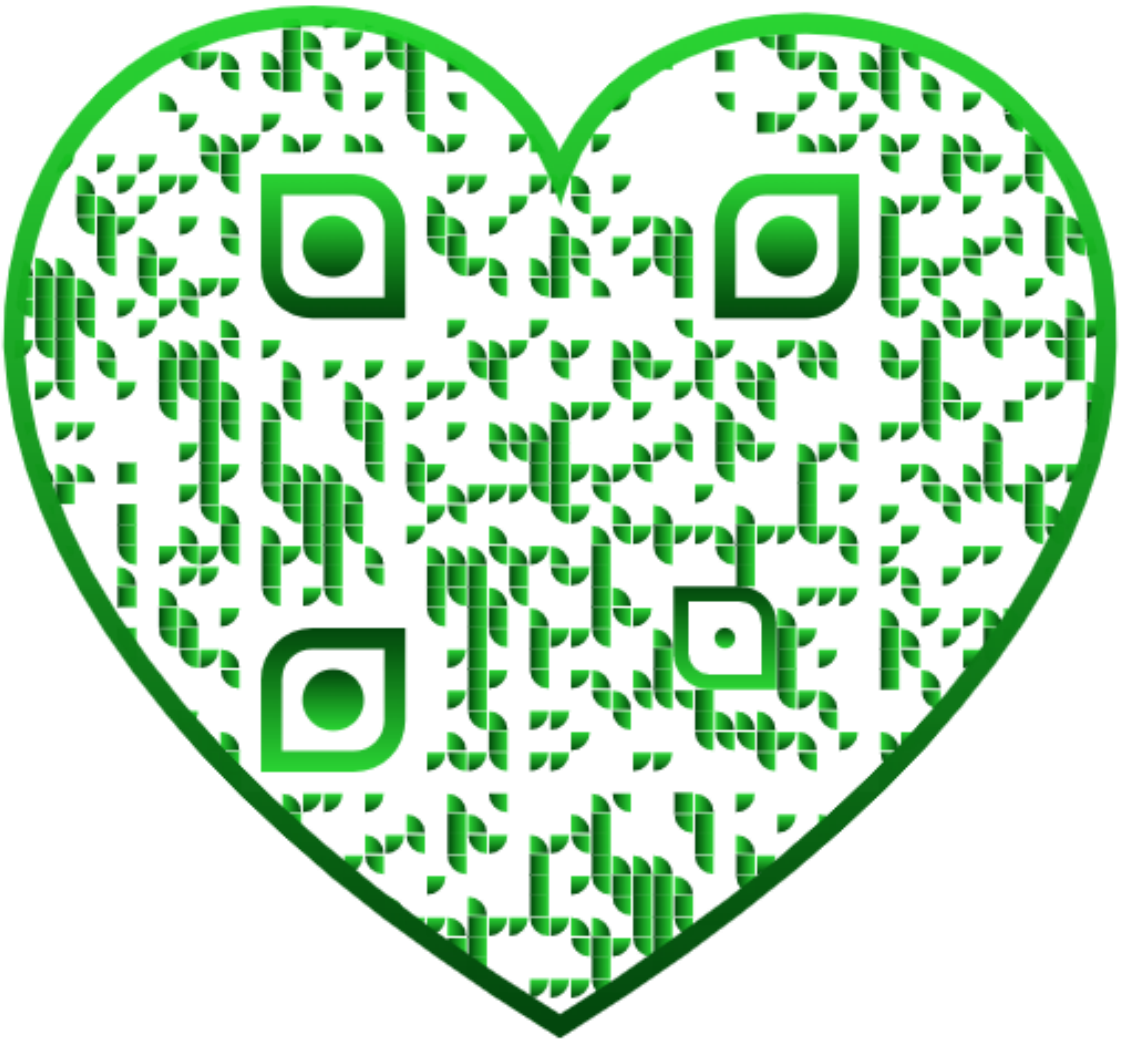
A scientific framework to explain spirit possession



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Acknowledgements

The first edition of this book was originally written as a thesis for the academic qualification of Doctor of Philosophy, and is the culmination of an academic and spiritual journey that has taken twenty years to bring me to this point. I have learned that there are two ways to learn; by being taught by others and by one's own experience. I have learned from my teachers, from science and from many life experiences. I have also learned through the experience of my personal relationship with what some may call *God*, what others may call *Absolute Reality*, and what others may call the *Transcendent*. There are many names for it and each of us has our own understanding of it depending on our unique religious, spiritual or mystical experiences. I therefore feel obliged to acknowledge, first and foremost, the guidance that I have been given by God in bringing me to this place at this time in presenting this book, for it is to the glory of the unseen and unknown universal power that we call God that it is written.

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Introduction

Possession, Exorcism and Spirit Release Therapy

The term “spirit possession” has negative connotations, but not all spirit possession is negative. Spiritual healers can be possessed by the Holy Spirit and trance mediums can be possessed by their spirit “Guides”.

This second edition further builds upon the contribution made by Frederic Myers, one of the founder members of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), to our understanding of one of the most profound of spiritual experiences - the possession of an individual by a spirit entity that can be perceived as benevolent or malign, creative or destructive, healthy or unhealthy. Spirit Release Therapy (SRT), which I explain more fully below, can be used as a method of intervention to relieve individuals of the influence of unhealthy spirit influences that are often attributed to the earthbound spirits of the deceased. It is comprised of an eclectic mix of secular and spiritual concepts and procedures that are not dependent on traditional psychiatric models of mental health care, or religious exorcism, but are complimentary to them. The experience of SRT therapists, together with the theoretical concepts and experimental methods of Frederic Myers, provide the phenomena of spirit possession and exorcism with a dimension of understanding that previous anthropological, theological and medical methods and theories lack.

In Part I of this book I will highlight the general problems that Western society has with the concept of spirit possession, and the tendency to perceive it as a remnant of outmoded superstitious beliefs. I will examine

the methods currently used by the social sciences and psychological research into beliefs in the paranormal to outline the foundations that underpin contemporary research methods, and to highlight some of their deficiencies.

In Part II, I introduce Myers' expanded conceptual framework and experimental methods that address those deficiencies identified in Part I. Part III applies the conceptualisations, methods and theories of Myers, together with the findings of contemporary science into the nature of consciousness and psychic (psi) phenomena to the problem of spirit possession. It is the application of twenty-first century science to the phenomenon of spirit possession that makes this book unique.

Perceptual Differences between Science and Religion

Different scientific disciplines approach the study of the natural world from a foundation that is grounded in the information presented to them. This gives rise to their respective perspectives, or world-views. Similarly, different religious traditions and practices have their own perspectives that are grounded more in a belief or faith, or very often in profound subjective experiences. Therefore the topics of possession and exorcism will elicit different responses that are dependent on different belief systems and general perceptions.

The sciences that study the physical world we inhabit are not able to acknowledge unseen determinants of human behaviour such as *volition* (that is deliberate *intention* or the exercising of *free will*), and yet there are countless numbers of people who believe in the existence of an alternate reality or a transcendent realm that is beyond the four-dimensional physical space-time continuum. There are some scholars of theology and transcendent cosmology who refer to this transcendent realm as a "fifth-dimension". Nonetheless, there is a perceptual schism between the monism[1] of mechanistic science and the dualism[2] of religious faith that has fluctuated in its divergence and convergence since the scientific enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scientific enquiry claims to be objective, and yet, as individuals we have subjective experiences that are extremely difficult to quantify objectively, and this is just one reason why mechanistic science has such problems with spiritual matters.

Contemporary enquiry into the nature of consciousness has matured into a recognised science, but the general impression gained from its enquiry is that investigators have a tendency to believe (or convey) that they are discovering something new. What they are discovering is not new at all, but has its origins in a concept that is common to all religious and spiritual traditions throughout history. Religious mystics have been teaching us for centuries that there is a realm beyond the physical, and Mr Frederic W.H. Myers, together with his colleagues at the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) set out in the late nineteenth century to prove its existence by using those scientific methods that were available to them at that time. This book sets out to examine those theories and methods of Myers that have been lost, ignored, derided or forgotten by modern mainstream science and resituate them in their proper place: in the scientific enquiry into the spiritual nature of man and the fundamental nature of the human mind.

The pragmatic clinical approach and positive therapeutic outcomes of Spirit Release Therapy (SRT) supported and reinforced by the scientific conceptual framework of Frederic Myers can help us to understand more fully the difficult relationship between the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual domains of human experience.

It is with this understanding that the emergent spiritual psychiatry now being practised by an increasing number of psychiatrists can be validated and incorporated into a viable and acceptable scientific conceptual framework that can make better sense of spirit possession.

What are Possession and Exorcism?

Every culture and religious belief system throughout history has its traditional beliefs of spirit possession in some form or other with corresponding rituals for the release or exorcism of spirit entities. There are no anthropologists, theologians or historians who would argue against this. Christianity, for example, has its angels, devils and demons (although the majority of modern Christians probably do not believe they really exist). Islam has its *Jinn* and the Hindus have a vast pantheon of spirits.

As we shall see “possession” is an imprecise term with a variety of definitions. It can mean being possessed by a spirit of either good or evil intent or being possessed by an idea that is particularly compelling or obsessive, as we find in the common expression: “What possessed him to do that?” Where obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is the psychiatric

term for irrational, ritualistic behaviour *obsession* was the term adopted in Catholic theology to differentiate between the somnambulist form of possession, where the subject loses consciousness of his self-awareness, and the milder, lucid form of spirit influence where there is no such loss.

Yet another form of possession is where one person has such a strong emotional attachment to another to the degree that they have no free will, for example possession by family members or possession by a group-mind, such as in dogmatic religious cults or fundamentalist terrorist ideology. A possessor need not be in close proximity to the possessed for their influence and spiritual presence to be any less powerful.

The modern use of the word *possessed* within the context of a compelling, irrational motivation is a residual use left over from the medieval period when it was commonly thought that most, if not all, destructive behaviour was caused by possession or influence from the devil. Possession was an idiom that was a part of the cultural vocabulary of early modern people.

A primary theme of this book is to highlight the difficulty in discernment [3] between autogenic (that is self-created) thought-forms, pseudo (imagined) possession, and authentic possession or spirit influence. Within the realm of abnormal psychology the *autogenic thought form* is a concept that the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet ascribed as the "fixed idea", which is an essential component in his dissociation theory of hysteria. Thus Janet writes:

> Hypothetically we may say that such fixed ideas are dangerous because they are no longer under the control of the personality, because they belong to a group of phenomena which have passed beyond the dominion of the conscious will.

It is unfortunate that there is no academic forum (yet) where modern practitioners of SRT can present their findings for peer review, but one of the most common forms of possession being experienced by individuals is that of the self-created thought form that can take on demonic characteristics. Pierre Janet's case of "Achille", reported in 1894 is one of those cases that can provide a model for understanding the concept of the self-created demon.

Janet's case of Achille provides a foundation for those clinicians who specialise in the treatment of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) (which

was formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder [MPD]) and reinforces the theory that all cases of possession are autogenic. However, once we have understood the concept of possession within the scientific framework of Myers, we will be in a position to demonstrate that not all cases of possession are autogenic, and to assume that they are can result in the misdiagnoses of chronic mental illnesses that are resistant to traditional psychiatric interventions.

Janet's case of Achille provides us with an excellent example of how to deal with the demon, whether it is autogenic or otherwise. Janet used hypnosis to cure his patient and rid him of his demon. Hypnosis is at the very core of Myers' conceptual framework, and, as I shall elucidate in Chapter Seven, hypnosis is a method of exploration, experimentation and clinical intervention that bridges the gulf between anthropological, psychological and religious interpretations of spirit phenomenology.

The dangers of misdiagnosis are important considerations from opposite directions. By this I mean that it is possible to diagnose spirit possession where there is none, and conversely it is much more probable that mental illness is diagnosed where spirit influence is the cause of the illness. In either direction the consequences of misdiagnosis can be catastrophic, and in Chapter One I cite examples where care-givers who believed that children were possessed were found guilty of child-abuse and murder by using extreme forms of physical exorcism in attempts to cure the child.

There is a danger that the news media are inclined towards pointing the finger of blame at Social Services for their failure to protect children and criminalizing the abusive caregivers - thereby taking any focus away from the possibility that there is something that needs to be addressed within the social and religious belief systems of the perpetrators. La Fontaine's book, *The Devil's Children,* brings these issues into sharp focus and it is for this same reason that I look at possession and exorcism in Chapter One from a social science and Western cultural perspective.

A sudden increase in reported cases of possession in the United States during the 1970s and 80s was deemed the result of William Blatty's film *The Exorcist* in 1973 and his book of the same name. Cultural anthropologist Michael Cuneo explored the impact on North American society of Blatty's work and witnessed more than fifty exorcisms in his investigation. Cuneo's findings, which are also examined in Chapter One, offer a socio/cultural perspective on possession and exorcism, and make an

important contribution to our understanding of the impact of the entertainment industry and news media reporting on such controversial and misunderstood topics.

Treatment Approaches to Spirit Possession

There are three basic methods that have been traditionally used for treatment of those who have been deemed to be demonically possessed.

The first consists of trying to expel the spirit physically by such means as bleeding, beating, or whipping the patient. It is this first method that was adopted by the caregivers in those cases cited above. The second method is to transfer the offending spirit to another body, usually an animal. The third form, and arguably the most frequently applied is religious *exorcism*, which is driving the spirit out by conjurations, prayer and ritual. It was this third method that Cuneo sought to examine.

"Exorcism" is no less an imprecise term than possession. It has been used for any prayerful act by a priest with the intention of releasing a demonic entity from a person or place. The same word has been used for a procedure lasting minutes and for one lasting weeks in which priests and others are involved in intense interaction with a person or place thought to be possessed or harassed by evil spirits.

Modern Christian ministry recognises the problems created by inappropriate beliefs in possession or suspicions that someone is experiencing some kind of paranormal activity and in England there was an attempt to create a national information infrastructure administered at diocesan level.

The term "deliverance" is adopted by the Anglican Church in preference to exorcism, and those experiencing disturbing psychic or spiritual phenomena were advised to contact their local parish priest. Accordingly it is the priest's role to present their case to the specialist spiritual investigation team, which ought to be comprised of deliverance ministers, psychiatrists and psychic investigators who will be able to advise a course of action depending on whether the disturbance is deemed to be caused by mental illness, paranormal activity or genuine spirit manifestation. Whether this advice has any benefits, or whether such an infrastructure actually exists is a topic that is open to further research.

In addition to the above mentioned initiatives, SRT has been emerging as a collection of methods and techniques used by an increasing number of

independent practitioners in a variety of professional therapeutic disciplines. There is therefore a growing need for SRT practitioners to be guided, trained and supported by an institution that has the scientific and educational authority to give accreditation to its training.

What is Spirit Release Therapy?

Spirit Release Therapy (SRT) is a term that is used by some practitioners, but not all, to describe a treatment modality that has evolved from the pioneering clinical experience of medical practitioners, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who have encountered patients with illnesses that have not responded to traditional psychotherapy or psychiatric methods. Such pioneers have treated them successfully using their own *intuition* (described below) and by responding to the expressed needs of the patient and those spirit entities that are encountered in dialogue, rather than treating them according to predetermined theories and the beliefs and assumptions of the therapist. SRT could therefore be described as a person centred, or perhaps a "soul" centred therapy.

Each practitioner of SRT has his or her own definition of their practice, but in order to introduce Spirit Release Therapy here I shall quote the definition offered by William Baldwin who writes:

> Spirit Releasement Therapy comes under the broad category of Transpersonal Psychology methods, and is so named because it aims to *release* from the client / patient / host, any disembodied consciousness of any sort.

Baldwin coined the term "releasement" as an alternative to release in order to differentiate the releasing of spirits from other forms of release, but the term has not generally been adopted by other practitioners because it is seen as an unnecessary complication in the meaning of the term.

Baldwin's definition is a simple one, but it incorporates a very wide diversity of spirit entities with the term "disembodied consciousness of any sort", and it is part of the SRT practitioner's art and skill to uncover the type of spirit (or spirits) that are affecting the patient. In Baldwin's definition he uses the word "consciousness" that implies a direct relationship between spirit and consciousness. A spirit can therefore be referred to as a "disembodied consciousness". It is within the conceptual framework of Myers that the relationship between *consciousness* and *spirit* is explored in

more detail in Parts II and III of this book. Furthermore, I pose the question, "Why does science persist in treating the subject of *Spirit* as a taboo in the search for an explanation of consciousness?"

Definitions of Autonomous Spirit Entities

SRT practitioners who define spirit entities according to their orientation can be divided loosely into three main groups: those practitioners who release spirit entities from places, such as Archie Lawrie of the Scottish Society for Psychical Research (SSPR) and Linda Williamson; and those who release spirits from people such as Carl Wickland, Hans Naegeli-Osjord and William Baldwin. Others, represented by the man-and-wife team of Terry & Natalia O'Sullivan refer to themselves as "soul rescuers" who have learned to tread the path of the shaman where they communicate with the spirits and understand the rules of co-existence with the other world.

Archie Lawrie could be regarded by many as a "ghost-hunter", but in contrast with other investigators of the so-called "paranormal" he enlists the aid of a medium to locate and communicate with those restless spirits that may be referred to as ghosts and poltergeists.

Linda Williamson, in her book *Ghosts and Earthbound Spirits* remarks that mediums who are either aware of, or communicate, with spirits are not able to arrive at a consensus on how ghosts or spirits are defined. Ghosts are generally deemed to be those spirits that inhabit houses, whilst others prefer to call them "earthbound spirits" and Spiritualists refer to those they communicate with as "spirits". Williamson makes the distinction between spirits that exist in a spiritual domain or spirit-world such as "guides" and the spirits of the deceased and those who remain "earthbound" for a variety of reasons. Williamson asserts that "evil" spirits do exist, but in her own experience poltergeists are not evil but "lost and frustrated" spirits of earthbound souls that are trying to attract attention to themselves.

The term "disembodied consciousness of any sort", used by Baldwin, can include the spirits of deceased persons, non-human destructive entities that may commonly be referred to in religious language as "demons" (often referred to as Dark Force Entity or DFE), negative thought forms created by the host or other living persons, intergenerational curses, elementals, alien life forms and others less clearly defined. Even the discarnate spirits of foetuses that have been terminated can be encountered, and Winafred Lucas

describes techniques for communicating with the spirit of the unborn child and negotiating its return to the spirit world in preference to being forced out with physical abortion, which is traumatic for the spirit of the foetus and may cause it to remain earthbound and attached to the mother.

Whether these disembodied conscious forms actually exist in material or metaphysical form or whether they are created from the imagination is a subject of debate even between SRT practitioners. However, the aim of this book is to encourage the academic and scientific study of SRT and its contribution as a therapeutic modality in the alleviation of psychological or physiological distress and to situate it within Transpersonal Psychology.

It is from the scientific methods and framework of Myers that the ontological status of discarnate spirit entities may ultimately be determined in preference to dismissing the idea without testing the hypothesis as a viable alternative.

Baldwin places SRT as a therapy within the domain of *Transpersonal Psychology*, which is defined by the Transpersonal Section of the British Psychological Association (BPA):

> Transpersonal Psychology might loosely be called the psychology of spirituality and of those areas of the human mind which search for higher meanings in life, and which move beyond the limited boundaries of the ego to access an enhanced capacity for wisdom, creativity, unconditional love and compassion. It honours the existence of transpersonal experiences, and is concerned with their meaning for the individual and with their effect upon behaviour.

Although identified by Baldwin as a therapy that comes within the domain of Transpersonal Psychology, SRT has not yet entered into the academic study of transpersonal experiences, but I hope that this book may contribute to a remedy for its omission in the past.

Differences between SRT and Exorcism

Spirits, whether they be earthbound or co-existing in another dimension or "spirit-realm" are often referred to as "attachments" if they are interacting in some way with a person rather than referring to them as "possessing" spirits. According to Williamson, earthbound spirits are in a confused mental state and many of them do not even realise that they are dead. Possessing spirits on the other hand tend to be deliberate in their intentions

and may enter into the subject's physical and spiritual *space* and take control over the thoughts and behaviours of the unwilling host, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

SRT can, depending on the belief system or world-view of the patient, be applied in a purely secular, spiritual or religious therapeutic context. Spirit Release Therapy does not impose any theory, concept, philosophy or belief system onto the patient, or try to shoe-horn the patient into a theoretical model of health or sickness. SRT aims to facilitate the healthy well-being of the patient and the "attached" entities through the patient's and the attachment's own understanding of their experiences and perceptual world-views. This is achieved by allowing the therapist to enter into the integrated world of the patient and the attached spirits through the gateway that we shall identify as a *state of consciousness* that is different from what is commonly acknowledged as the normal waking state (or normal conscious awareness).

The process of accessing mental phenomena that exist beyond the limitations of normal conscious awareness is fundamental in linking SRT practice with the concepts and methods of Myers who identified the *Subliminal Self* as the greater part of the total mind, and the *Supraliminal* as the much limited normal waking state (see Chapter Six).

SRT is fundamentally different from religious exorcism where spirits are assumed to be "evil" and cast out. William Baldwin's approach is sympathetic and therapeutic, and in complete contrast to the popular conception of exorcism. Baldwin writes:

> The widely accepted method of exorcism seemed violent and without compassion, thus I rejected the traditional religious approach .

Baldwin is one of many professionals including Edith Fiore, Shakuntala Modi and Hans Naegeli-Osjord who have had their own belief systems challenged and have discovered hidden entities of various forms with their patients. A careful examination of all the literature on SRT reveals that all practitioners have had both their scientific and religious beliefs challenged and are essentially guided by their own clients; and, depending on the nature of the intrusive spirit, it is dealt with appropriately and not as a form of exorcism.

As a diagnostic system, SRT has been found by some practitioners to be a far more efficient method of identifying the aetiology of a very wide range of illnesses, including mental, emotional and psychosomatic, than traditional medical diagnostics. It is an imperative that these claims need to be substantiated by rigorous empirical studies. The fact that medical science does have the means and methods to test the efficacy of Spirit Release therapy has yet to be taken seriously, but the day must certainly come when it is applied without prejudice and the findings of SRT practitioners will be tested and validated by medical science.

SRT Methods of Consultation and Intervention

Consultations with clients or patients in most psychiatric or other therapeutic situations are usually conducted in a face-to-face interview when the normal waking cognitive abilities of both therapist and client are engaged in mutual dialogue. Apart from the initial consultation where base-line data is collected, SRT consultations and therapeutic interventions are very rarely conducted in this way, but may comprise of one or more of the methods listed below:

1. With the *Intuitive Therapist* method, the therapist listens with intuition to information that is given to him/her from a source that is beyond the threshold of normal waking sensory perception. The therapist may be accessing information from the subliminal mind of the client, from the client's *Higher Self*, from a *spirit guide* that has volunteered to assist or from a discarnate entity (or entities) that are the cause of the client's distress. Although the therapist is using his/her abilities to communicate at frequencies beyond the threshold of normal waking consciousness it is not always necessary to artificially induce an altered state of consciousness. The fact that communication with discarnate entities takes place and information is received from any of the above sources is an indication that an altered state, or at the very least, a change in mental frequency, has been achieved. Where the term *intuitive* may be a little weak or misleading this method is often referred to as *channelling*. Using this method the therapist will be using acquired natural skills in telepathy (mind to mind), clairvoyance (clear seeing), clairaudience (clear hearing) or clairsentience (clear physical sensation).

2. The *Interactive* method enables the therapist to engage with discarnate entities with the client acting as intermediary. In this method it is the client who will be using abilities in telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience. It is common for clients to be unaware that they have these abilities to *interact* consciously, and there is a tendency for them to believe that what they are experiencing are the effects of an over-active imagination or a form of mental illness. Whilst using this form of communication it is important to be able to encourage the client to trust their own intuition and to permit the expression of thoughts and feelings that are not their own without allowing their own conscious analytical mind to interfere.
3. *The Direct Interactive* method is where the client and therapist are in a face-to-face situation and where a communication with the attached entity is effected through the client acting as communication *medium* whilst in an altered state of consciousness. Using this method enables the entity to speak through the client using the client's voice box and neurological infrastructure. This method is a form of *positive* possession where the client voluntarily permits the discarnate entity to take control of the speech centres.
4. *The Remote* method. This method is where a remote scanner is not in direct contact with the client, and is used as an instrument of communication between the facilitator (therapist) the client's *higher self*, the disruptive entity(s) and any *spirit guides* that may be present to offer guidance and advice. The mechanisms of communication applied by the remote method would simply be described as *telepathic* or partial *astral-projection* which may be understood as a relative of *remote viewing* which is explored in Chapter Ten. Telepathy is at the heart of spirit possession and attachment and likewise telepathy is where the remedy lies, and later in this book I shall cite the scientific evidence that supports this theory.
5. *Group Soul Rescue*. This method involves a group of spirit release practitioners who collectively are more able to deal with the case. This is a method in common practice with the Brazilian Spiritist movement.

Historical Development of SRT

The notion that mental illness was caused by possessing spirits was a common belief prior to the emergence of scientific thought and medical practice during the scientific enlightenment, and the traditional method of dealing with them was religious exorcism. With the emergence of scientific rationalism psychiatrists replaced exorcists and secular scientific thought replaced religious belief. Ideas of demons and possession had been relegated to the realms of superstition until Carl Wickland, a modern medical practitioner, published his comprehensive account, *Thirty Years Amongst the Dead,* in 1924 of his experiences with his own patients who were negatively influenced by invading spirits of the deceased. In the historical development of SRT, the early pioneers, such as Wickland and Adam Crabtree, brought to our attention those dramatic cases where serious mental illness such as psychosis and multiple personality were successfully treated with SRT.

Discovering an Earthbound

Dr Carl Wickland describes his experience of discovering his first discarnate earthbound soul when he was a medical student practising dissection on the corpse of a sixty year-old man. On his return home, his wife spontaneously entered into a state of somnambulism, and as Wickland reached out to assist her into a chair a commanding voice issued from her voice box and demanded to know, “What do you mean by cutting me?”

It transpired that the earthbound spirit of the man to whom the body had belonged had followed him home and had taken advantage of Mrs Wickland’s gift of mediumship to communicate his displeasure at being molested without realising that he was dead. Following this incident, Wickland and his wife, aided with the guidance of discarnate beings who, Wickland claims, were “of a superior intelligence from other realms in our universe”, proceeded on a career lasting thirty years to help earthbound spirits of deceased individuals move on to where they were supposed to be on their path of spiritual development. The result of Wickland’s experience is an archive of documented cases of spirit possession and his method of removing them, supported by stenographically recorded sessions of psychical research with his wife acting as the medium of communication between the two worlds of the living and the deceased.

Psychosis or Spirit Attachment?

Among Wickland's recorded cases are several where a patient who had been diagnosed with psychosis was cured following a successful spirit release session. These cases are of particular interest because they represent a group of patients whose suffering is at the extreme end of the scale of diagnosed mental illnesses and are the most difficult to treat using traditional medical and psychotherapeutic methods. They are therefore essential examples to illustrate the efficacy of SRT in treating illness that is automatically assumed to be mental illness by medical science. As an example, Wickland cites his case of "Mrs M":

> One summer evening we were called to the home of "Mrs M", a lady of culture and refinement; she was a musician of high rank and when the social demands made upon her proved too great she suffered a nervous breakdown. She had become intractable and for six weeks had been in such a raving condition that her physicians had been unable to relieve her, and day and night nurses were in constant attendance.
>
> We found the patient sitting up in bed, crying one minute like a forlorn child, and again screaming in fear: "Matilla! Matilla!" Then suddenly fighting and struggling, she would talk a wild gibberish of English and Spanish, (the latter a language of which she had no knowledge).
>
> Mrs Wickland immediately gave her psychic diagnosis, saying the case was unquestionably one of obsession, and this was unexpectedly confirmed when Mrs Wickland, who was standing at the foot of the bed, with wraps on ready to leave, was found to be suddenly entranced. We placed her on a davenport in the music room, where for two hours I talked in turn with several spirits who had just been attracted from the patient.
>
> There were three spirits – a girl named Mary, her suitor, an American, and his Mexican rival, Matilla. Both of the men had vehemently loved the girl and just as fiercely hated each other. In a jealous rage one had killed the girl, and then in a desperate fight the two rivals had killed each other.
>
> All were unaware of being "dead", although Mary said, weeping wretchedly, "I thought they were going to kill each other, but here they are, still fighting."
>
> This tragedy of love hatred and jealousy had not ended with physical death; the group had unconsciously been drawn into the psychic atmosphere of the patient, and the violent fighting had continued within her aura. Since her nervous resistance was exceedingly low at this time, one after the other had usurped her physical body, with a resulting disturbance that was unexplainable by her attendants.

Dissociative Disorders and SRT

On the arguments put forward by psychologists with regard to *dissociative disorders* Wickland writes:

> In the study of cases of multiple personalities, dissociated personalities or disintegrated states of consciousness, modern psychologists disclaim the possibility of foreign intelligences on the ground that these personalities give neither evidence of supernormal knowledge, nor of being of spiritistic origin.
>
> Our experience, to the contrary, has proven that the majority of these intelligences are oblivious of their transition and hence it does not enter their minds that they are spirits, and they are loathe to recognise the fact.

Carl Wickland's records from his thirty years of clinical experience and organised psychical research are a valuable contribution to scientific knowledge and testimony to the reality of non-corporeal existence.

Together with the documented scientific evidence provided by earlier mystics and scientists such as Emmanuel Swedenborg, Allan Kardec, Edgar Cayce, William James, Frederic Myers and James Hyslop, Wickland provides validated scientific evidence to support the hypothesis of spirit attachment as a reality to modern medicine that is difficult to ignore or refute. More recent research into the validity of the hypothesis that there is an afterlife has the valuable resource of Wickland's records to provide a foundation for exploring this avenue of human experience. It is to Wickland, therefore, as a pioneer in Spirit Release Therapy that we turn to in the first instance for medical descriptions of the phenomenology of spirit attachment and methods of releasing them from their unwilling hosts.

Dissociation and Paranoia

In support and validation of his own experiences of dealing with cases of dissociation and paranoia, Wickland quotes James Hyslop, professor of logic and ethics at Columbia University from 1889 to 1902, and editor of the *American Journal of Psychical Research*:

> The term obsession is employed by psychic researchers to denote the abnormal influence of spirits on the living.... The cures affected have required much time and patience, the use of psychotherapeutics of an unusual kind, and the employment of psychics to get into contact with the obsessing agents and thus to release the hold which such agents have, or to educate

> them to voluntary abandonment of their persecutions.... Every single case of dissociation and paranoia to which I have applied cross-reference has yielded to the method and proved the existence of foreign agencies complicated with the symptoms of mental or physical deterioration. It is high time to prosecute experiments on a large scale in a field that promises to have as much practical value as any application of the scalpel or the microscope.

The observation by Hyslop that "every single case of dissociation and paranoia ... are complicated by the presence of foreign agencies" provides initial support for the hypothesis that dissociative disorders can be confused with spirit interference. Furthermore, Hyslop's reference to "the use of psychotherapeutics of a very unusual kind, and the employment of psychics to get into contact with the possessing agents" is arguably the first mention of a treatment method that has subsequently become known as *Spirit Release Therapy*.

Carl Wickland was one of the earliest in a series of twentieth-century professionals who discovered discarnate entities affecting their own patients and published their findings. These professionals include (in chronological order of publishing) Adam Crabtree (1985), Edith Fiore (1987), Hans Naegeli-Osjord (1988), Irene Hickman (1994), William Baldwin (1995), Shakuntala Modi (1997), and others since. It is impractical to examine the wealth of individual contributions of all of these authors due to the need for brevity. However, I shall present below some of the contributions of Adam Crabtree, Edith Fiore and Irene Hickman.

Multiple Personality or Spirit Possession?

Adam Crabtree has taken the time to research the development of psychotherapy in the treatment of those who are diagnosed either correctly or incorrectly as mentally ill from his own clinical experiences with patients. Crabtree's work is important for two reasons. Firstly, because he has developed an interest in these anomalous phenomena from a scientific research perspective, and secondly from a personal one where, as a psychotherapist, he has experienced the phenomena that are relevant to the practice of SRT. Crabtree was a Benedictine monk and ordained in the Catholic Church as a priest in 1964. As a serious student of the human psyche he became a psychotherapist. He has also been a lecturer in

philosophy and the psychology of religion. In the introduction to Crabtree's first book *Multiple Man* published in 1985, Colin Wilson has this to say:

> ...he is first and foremost a scientist, and his first response to the mystery of multiple personality was to study its medical history in detail. The first part of the present book is as balanced an introduction to this bewildering topic as I have ever come across. But the most important section of the book is the one that begins with chapter ten, describing Crabtree's own experiences of such cases. It was, I think, just as well for Crabtree to offer his credentials as a scientific historian in the first part of the book, otherwise some of these cases – and I draw particular attention to those of 'The Confused Father' and 'The Complaining Mother' – would give rise to the suspicion that he is stretching the facts. While some psychologists will, no doubt, prefer to ignore Crabtree's findings, those who are open-minded enough to consider them without bias will find that they open strange and exciting perspectives.

The first part of Crabtree's book provides an in-depth overview of the conceptual frameworks that accommodate multiple personality and spirit possession phenomena; the same concepts that Wickland identified regarding the spirit world and life after death, but with the addition of the collective phenomena of *altered states of consciousness*, which is a significant component of Myers' work, and therefore of prime importance in my argument to support Myers' scientific framework.

SRT, Hypnosis and Secondary Selves

On a foundation of the discoveries of the early mesmerists from Franz Anton Mesmer to the present day, Crabtree identifies various methods of inducing magnetic sleep (hypnotic trance, or the dissociated state) and the observable phenomena of the induced trance state. According to Crabtree, it became apparent to the early magnetisers that the subject entered into a trance-like state that facilitated at least two distinct groupings of phenomena that were different from the normal waking state. One group of characteristics are described as "lower phenomena" and the other are described as "higher phenomena":

Characteristics of the lower consciousness included:

a) A sleepwalking kind of consciousness

b) Double consciousness and double memory
c) Loss of sense of identity
d) Suggestibility
e) Heightened memory
f) Deadening of the senses
g) Insensibility to pain
h) Intense rapport with the magnetiser

The higher consciousness characteristics included four special groupings:

1. Physical or sensorial rapport [perceptions of the physical senses of the other]
2. Mental rapport [mind reading - telepathy]
3. Clairvoyance [clear seeing in spirit realms]
4. Ecstasy [mystical experience]

Crabtree reports that the early magnetisers attributed these phenomena to a second self, or double-consciousness, and this discovery was accepted as an observable scientific fact. In 1842, the English surgeon James Braid, introduced the term "hypnosis" and took the scientific investigation into trance phenomena into a new direction. He discovered that the hypnotic state had a number of different stages or depth. A subject could move through different stages from light trance to somnambulism to unconscious. Opinions differed between investigators as to how many distinct levels of consciousness could be accessed as the trance deepened.

Experiments conducted by Myers' colleague Edmund Gurney in the 1880s at the British Society for Psychical Research revealed that each different level of consciousness produced a different memory chain. Each memory chain characterised a different personality that was separate from the others. Later researchers discovered as many as eight different memory chains in subjects which indicated that there may be no limit to the number of distinctly separate sections of consciousness into which the hypnotised subject could divide or have access to.

Moving deeper into an altered state could be regarded as moving along a continuum of depth that is similar to moving down a series of steps where each step is a discrete state of consciousness or "personality" with a discrete memory chain that differentiates one from another.

According to Crabtree, this on-going research was revealing what was referred to by the early magnetisers as the *second self* was more probably a much more divided or *multiple self*.

The Hidden Observer or Higher Self

A problem revealed itself in experiments to try to discover the nature of these separated personalities or discrete states of consciousness. According to Crabtree, it was known by early researchers into hypnotic phenomena that the somnambulist was highly suggestible and could be influenced to experience positive hallucinations, i.e. to see something that wasn't there, or negative hallucinations, i.e. to not see something that *was* there. Crabtree describes the experiment that confounded observers, (but in retrospect has significant meaning for SRT practitioners):

> The hypnotised subject is at one end of the room and the hypnotist is at the other. There is a table between them. The hypnotist gives the subject the post-hypnotic suggestion; on awakening he will perceive the room as devoid of furniture – a negative hallucination with regard to the table. When the subject is awakened, careful questioning reveals that he really believes there is no furniture in the room. The hypnotist then asks the subject to walk over to him and he does so, but instead of walking in a straight line, he moves in an arc to avoid the table. When the hypnotist asks why, the subject does not know why, or makes some weak excuse, but when asked whether he was trying to avoid something, he will reply, "Of course not." When further questioned about whether there is any furniture in the room, the subject will again answer no. But in order that the subject *not see* something and act in the manner suggested by the hypnotist, something within him *had to see* the object and act upon that perception.

Alfred Binet describes the problem:

> ...in order to cease to see an object – to have that alone excluded from sight – a person must begin by perceiving and recognising it, however that may be done, and the rejection of the perception can only take place after it has been established ... Now, who does this supervising? What is the intelligence that always decides that the subject shall perceive this and not that? It is not the normal ego, for that is not conscious of anything. It only accepts

> what it gets. It must be therefore, a personality capable of *seeing the object* ... As to what this personality may be; I for one am completely in the dark...

To clarify the nature of the problem further; the waking consciousness is hallucinating and is not aware of the table but avoids it without knowing why. The hypnotised personality is hallucinating and is unaware of the table and is therefore unable to guide the waking consciousness around it. Who then is aware of the table?

This problem has been tackled by the contemporary researcher Ernest Hilgard who identified what he called "the hidden observer". This behind-the-scenes hidden observer is a part of consciousness that observes everything that is going on between all other parts of the personality or states of consciousness and the hypnotiser and all other persons that interact with the subject. According to Crabtree it was Hilgard's intention to use the term hidden-observer as a metaphor. He didn't intend for the hidden observer to be considered as a secondary personality with an autonomous consciousness of its own.

As we make use of the detailed literature reviews of Crabtree in gaining some understanding of the concepts surrounding the phenomenon of altered states of consciousness, multiple personality and spirit possession, we are obliged to take very special note of the scientific discovery of the *hidden observer*. One of Hilgard's subjects makes a clear statement of the phenomenology of her experience of her hidden observer:

> The hidden observer is analytical, unemotional, and business-like. The part of me that was hypnotised was off on a tropical island. The hidden observer is a portion of ME. There's ME 1, ME 2 and ME 3. Me 1 is hypnotised, ME 2 is hypnotised and observing, and ME 3 is when I'm awake. The hidden observer is cognizant of everything that is going on; it's a little more narrow in its field of vision than ME 3, like being awake in a dream and fully aware of your actions. The hidden observer sees more, he questions more, he's aware of what's going on all the time but getting in touch is totally unnecessary. The first time [ice, water, pain] I thought it was an artefact of the situation, but after the second time, with hearing, I don't think that's the case. He's like a guardian angel that guards you from doing anything that will mess you up. The hidden observer is looking through the tunnel and sees everything in the tunnel. It's focused, doesn't pay attention to extraneous things. It's aware that the tones are coming through, aware that I was saying, "zero", that the ME 1 was also

> busy floating. ME 2 is watching all of this. Unless someone tells me to get in touch with the hidden observer I'm not in contact. It's just there.

The subject of the above quotation was involved in experiments to control pain using iced water and numbing suggestions. The context under which the experiment was conducted is not important with regard to SRT, but the importance of the concept of the *hidden observer* is realised when the techniques of SRT are applied and acknowledged. Hilgard, being a positivistic scientist is not considering the hypothesis that the hidden observer is anything other than autogenic in the makeup of the multiple personality, and like the majority of researchers into the phenomena of hypnosis he disregards the possibility that the essential nature of the psyche is spiritual. Hilgard, in common with most modern researchers and psychologists seems to have lost the meaning of the word "psyche", which originates in the Greek ψυχή meaning life, breath, soul, spirit.

In the practical application of *Spirit Release* techniques the *hidden observer* is of paramount importance. In SRT protocol there is a spiritual component of the individual that is regarded respectfully as the "higher-self", and it is from the higher-self that permission to proceed with a therapeutic intervention is always sought. In spiritual language, the Higher-Self is that part of the personality that is furthest away from the earth-plane and closest to God (or the transcendent). It may be hypothesised that if Hilgard's and other scientists' investigations into hypnotic phenomena were able to broaden their conceptual framework then they may find sympathy with the notion of the spiritual Higher-Self rather than trying to understand the hidden-observer as a purely autogenic phenomenon.

If the assumptions made regarding the Higher-Self by SRT are true then much of the scientific research that has been conducted into the phenomena of magnetic sleep, somnambulism, hypnosis and altered states of consciousness can be considered as blindly groping in the dark. The need for scientific explanations for extraordinary subjective experiences such as multiple personality and spirit possession have been side-tracked down a blind alley by rejection of the earlier concepts that were identified by Carl Wickland and earlier researchers, including Frederic Myers; namely that man's consciousness is an essential "spirit" and a spirit-world exists in parallel with the physical.

Crabtree cites several examples from the literature that have been assigned by psychological rationalists as double or multiple personality. He makes no comment on the phenomenology of each case until collectively at the end of the chapter where he makes this comment:

> When examining the data of multiple personality, one cannot overlook a phenomenon which exhibits certain striking similarities: "possession." Here, too, the subject exhibits a duality or even multiplicity of personalities which disclaim any identity with each other. Also in both the multiple personality and the possession experience, amnesias of various kinds may be present.

We shall see later that Frederic Myers made precisely the same assertion more than 100 years ago.

Continued Scepticism from SRT Practitioners

Dr Edith Fiore's contribution to the development of SRT, *The Unquiet Dead,* is a guide for therapists in adopting a more open minded approach to the experiences of their patients despite their own scepticism, together with practical advice for individuals and a simple method of clearing and protecting themselves from spirit possession.

Published Just two years after Crabtree's observations, this was Fiore's second work following the publication of her treatise on past life regression therapy.

With regard to past-life regression and what she calls "depossession" Fiore is quick to express her own scepticism pertaining to the reality of non-corporeal existence and reincarnation and acknowledges that she has a natural inclination towards rejection of these ideas due to the fact that she *had no conceptual framework* in which to accommodate them. But the reality of the "spontaneous" altered state experiences of her patients compelled her to acknowledge their subjective reality; and she was motivated to conduct her own research into these phenomena in order to find a conceptual framework that fits the experiences.

Fiore's literature search uncovered *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, references to Jesus of Nazareth casting out demons in *The Bible*, and the ancient writings of Homer, Plutarch and Josephus. She discovered the

cultural traditions of the ancient Chinese in their acknowledgement of ancestral spirits that go back more than ten thousand years, and more recently the Japanese exorcistic cult "Mahikari" which had four thousand members world-wide in 1970. Fiore accessed information on the ancient Egyptians and the equally ancient pre-Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*. Fiore takes time to explain the seven-tiered hierarchy of the Vedic model of human spiritual and physical existence.

Fiore's research uncovered information that some of the tenets of the ancient Vedic tradition resurfaced in the West in two movements in the nineteenth century with the emergence of Spiritualism and Theosophy. All of these traditions, ancient and modern led to the strongly held belief in the continuation of the individual personality after death. Fiore states that since her research was explicitly aimed at uncovering information on possession by earthbound spirits of the deceased she found particular interest in the Spiritualist and Theosophist movements and their influence on healers in various parts of the world.

Fiore discovered that, founded on the ancient world-wide tradition of *Shamanism* and the more recent *Spiritualism*, the modern healing and de-possession practices of "Spiritism" are flourishing in South America in the present day. Strongly influenced by the work of the French scientist Allan Kardec, the modern Spiritist movement in Sao Paulo, Brazil engages thirty-five hundred mediums from all walks of life from humble illiterates to lawyers who provide their services to the suffering for no charge.

Moving right up to date at her time of writing, Fiore makes references to the work of Carl Wickland and Adam Crabtree (both referenced above) to which she adds the works of American anthropologist Michael Harner who apparently shocked his colleagues by establishing a Shamanic healing society, and British psychiatrist Arthur Guirdham, who, after forty years of working with the mentally ill arrived at the conclusion that every form of severe mental illness can be caused by spirit interference.

Fiore acknowledges that there are a growing number of mental health workers who are becoming aware of a variety of de-possession techniques, and as their work is becoming known so there are others who seek training and it is with this mind that she introduces her methods.

Fiore states that throughout recorded history people have believed in the phenomenon of spirit possession by earthbound entities, and the experience crosses all boundaries of culture, class, intellect, and social structure.

Despite these traditions, beliefs and experiences, Fiore still believes that life after death, reincarnation and possession cannot be proven, but suggests that the burden of proof is not a priority; but when it comes to human suffering – results are.

Dr Raymond Moody, another specialist in the scientific research into non-corporeal existence contributed to Fiore's book with this foreword:

> Oddly, since the early part of the twentieth century, it has been unfashionable among professionals in the field of psychology to explore, in a careful and introspective way, the many unusual and sometimes spectacular alterations to which human consciousness is prone. In this climate, the early pioneering work of such scholars as William James has been rejected and treated with contempt by persons who seriously stated that the study of mind as awareness was impossible, and that the only thing which can be studied under the rubric of psychology is objectively observable behaviour. Presently we are seeing a change in this attitude, and today a large number of serious, well trained professionals in the field of psychology and medicine are actively engaged in the study of altered states of awareness. My friend and colleague, Dr Edith Fiore has made a most interesting study of one of the most controversial of one of these states – the ancient enigma of possession.

Even after treating more than five hundred patients during a period of seven years, who were possessed by earthbound spirits of the deceased, (that's 75% of her total client list) Fiore is still sitting on the fence of her own scientific scepticism, as she writes:

> I am not attempting to prove that spirits exist or that my patients were possessed. Rather, I will be showing you what goes on daily in my office and introducing a therapy that, although not a panacea, is effective and embodies ancient concepts within the context of twentieth-century hypnotherapy.

Where it may be hypothesised that some pioneering therapists of modern clinical approaches to spirit possession are still a little reticent about "coming out", they feel a powerful need to maintain their status as "scientists". They may have absolute faith in the efficacy of their methods, but still they question the possibility of a transcendental power that heals.

From Scepticism to Conversion

The dentist William Baldwin used hypnosis to help his patients overcome their fear of dentistry. With an ironic twist to using hypnosis as a means of dealing with a specific fear, Baldwin accidentally stumbled upon the phenomenon of spirit attachment by discovering earthbound souls attached to several of his patients. As a result of this discovery Baldwin gave up dentistry to dedicate the rest of his professional life to treating people suffering from spirit attachment, and his book *Spirit Releasement therapy* is acknowledged as a key text in the education and training of spirit release practitioners right up to the present day.

Psychiatrist Irene Hickman's first work, *Mind-Probe Hypnosis,* is a precursor, not only to her progression into spirit release therapy, but is also an introduction to the later works of Michael Newton, Gary Zukav and others who had similar experiences with patients spontaneously regressing to previous lives and the "life between lives".

Hickman's work progressed under training and guidance from William Baldwin to where she published her clinical experiences of spirit release in what she called *Remote Depossession* and added a new and interesting dimension to spirit release techniques in what could be described as the "remote" or "indirect" release method that I introduced above under the heading *Methods of Consultation and Intervention*. Remote (or indirect) spirit release involves the release of an attached entity without the conscious awareness of the host who may be located some considerable distance from the releasing practitioner. Hickman developed this method in order to overcome the possibility of contamination by suggestion from the therapist. Involving the use of telepathy, remote depossession could be described as "radical" and beyond the realms of mainstream scientific theory. On this point of radicalism, Willis Harman makes reference to the pioneering work of William James in his advocacy for a revised scientific framework that embraces "radical empiricism" in the preface to Hickman's work. William James was influenced by Myers, as I shall elucidate in Chapter Six. Further examination of Hickman's *remote* (or *indirect)* method and its comparison with "remote viewing" as practised by the United States Department of Defense for covert surveillance purposes is the subject for discussion in this book in Chapter Ten.

Spirit Release Today and the Future

An increasing number of mental health professionals are encountering people with a wide variety of problems that do not respond to medical or traditional psychological interventions. There are those professionals who are able to respond to the needs of their patients despite their own beliefs, such as hypnotherapist Roy Hunter and adopt what would be described as a "spirit release" technique despite his own reticence to use the term. Hunter's method is reviewed in Chapter Four where I examine beliefs and how they are investigated by psychological research. There are others, represented by psychotherapist Tom Zinser who acknowledge an alternate reality and treat their patients with the aid of *spirit guides* in much the same way as Carl Wickland cited above.

Common sense dictates that it is only a matter of time before mainstream medicine and clinical psychology in the UK accept the validity of these methods and for medical schools to incorporate them into their curricula. The Spiritist movement in Brazil, which has incorporated spirit release techniques into institutionalised medicine since the 1930s is paving the way, and has already held five conferences in the UK specifically for medical professionals. The *Sixth British Congress on Medicine and Spirituality* is scheduled to be held in London in November 2017.

Modern technology has enabled mental health service users to express their concerns and relate their experiences in social media and online video resources. Those who hear voices have a tendency to complain that mental health services treat them within the confines of the medical model and prescribe drugs, and they urge professionals to acknowledge that their experiences are real. It is apparent from these expressions that sufferers, like the mental health professionals who try to treat them, have no conceptual framework that can accommodate these experiences. It is for this very reason that I have undertaken this book, to provide patients and mental health professionals with a scientific conceptual framework that does accommodate the phenomenology of spirit possession and the surreptitious influence of discarnate spirit entities.

The conceptual framework that I will present is due to the rigorous scientific research and methodology of F.W.H. Myers.

So Who Was Frederic W.H. Myers?

Born in Keswick in 1843, Frederic William Henry Myers was initially a Cambridge scholar of the classics and earned his livelihood as an appointed inspector of schools. In 1882 he co-founded the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) together with other academics, scientists and intellectuals who all had their respective interests in a wide variety of psychic phenomena which included somnambulism, hysteria, animal magnetism, hypnosis, clairvoyance, Spiritualism and apparitions. Myers introduced the term "telepathy" in 1882.

Myers' primary objective was to pursue scientific evidence that Man has a soul and that his conscious personality survives bodily death:

> The question for man most momentous of all is whether or no he has an immortal soul; or —to avoid the word immortal, which belongs to the realm of infinities—whether or no his personality involves any element which can survive bodily death. In this direction have always lain the gravest fears, the farthest-reaching hopes, which could either oppress or stimulate mortal minds.

The results of his work with the SPR, spanning a period of over twenty years, is condensed into his *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* which was published two years following his own death in 1901. It has been hypothesised that his interest in theories concerned with the afterlife may have been influenced by his platonic relationship with Annie Marshall who died prematurely and left Myers with a deep sense of loss. However, his contribution to psychology in formulating a model of mind that he called the "Subliminal Self" was a far greater contribution to our modern understanding of the mind than is generally recognised. Myers was a pioneer in identifying what we now term the *subconscious*, and his theories had a significant influence on the ideas of William James, Pierre Janet and C. G. Jung. James often referred to Myers in his classic text *Varieties of Religious Experience* and attributes to him the discovery of a consciousness beyond the field of normal conscious awareness:

> I cannot but think that the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science is the discovery, first made in 1886 , that, in certain subjects at least, there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its

> usual centre and margin, but in addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts and feelings which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs. I call this the most important step forward because, unlike the other advances which psychology has made, this discovery has revealed to us an entirely unsuspected peculiarity in the constitution of human nature. No other step forward which psychology has made can proffer any such claim as this. In particular, this discovery of a consciousness existing beyond the field, or subliminally as Mr Myers terms it, casts light on many phenomena of religious biography.

Myers influenced the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet in the formulation of his theory of dissociation in hysterics. Janet made use of Myers' radical approach to "subliminal tendencies" to explain "automatisms" (involuntary acts and behaviours) and the existence of hidden states of consciousness that were unknown to the hysteric's ordinary conscious awareness.

Myers is accredited for providing Jung with a precursor to his theory of the "collective unconscious" and Jung is known to have referenced the work of Myers in his own doctoral thesis. I discuss the relationship between Jung's and Myers' ideas on dissociation and spirit possession in Chapter Six.

Myers is recognised by a minority of modern researchers such as Edward and Emily Kelly, Adam Crabtree, Alan Gould, Michael Grosso and Bruce Greyson who acknowledge the contribution he has made to psychology.

Competing Theories of Possession and Myers' Contribution

Myers was not concerned with religious belief or philosophical argument, and neither was he concerned with spirit possession at the beginning of his research. However, his discovery that spirit possession was directly connected with many "normal" and so-called "abnormal" personal experiences raised a number of interrelated questions of a religious, philosophic, or metaphysical nature that demanded immediate attention. For example: Is there a spirit world? Can we communicate with those who dwell there? And does man have a soul? These questions were answered for Myers in observations and experiments that resulted in over 10,000 pages of text, primarily published over a period of twenty years in the *Proceedings* and the *Journal* of the SPR.

Questions concerned with the state of being of spirit entities underpin these questions, and also to the related *mind-body* problem that was arguably created with the misinterpreted philosophy of Rene Descartes' *Cartesian Dualism*. These questions were, Myers claimed, within the realm of scientific enquiry, and subsequently he challenged the emerging science of psychology to tackle them. We may therefore ask whether psychology acknowledged and accepted the challenge, or chose instead to leave these questions to theology and natural philosophy.

Myers' Theories and a Comprehensive Model of Mind

What Myers was attempting to do was to provide empirical evidence that the soul of man exists as a non-corporeal spirit entity that survives bodily death. He developed scientific methods that revealed to him that what was being experienced or observed could not possibly be attributed to anything else other than an unobservable non-material source. He was not concerned with what people *believed*, but with the origins of phenomena that remained unexplained by positivistic science and unavailable through the sensory organs, the human eye or ear in particular. As we shall see, Myers pioneered methods that can be acknowledged as scientific, that explained how the invisible spirit can be detected and acknowledged.

One of the critical issues presented to Myers was how to distinguish between what could be interpreted as a "veridical" (from and external source) manifestation or an autogenic (self-created) hallucination.

Myers' approach to scientific enquiry and the difficulties faced by nineteenth-century psychology are examined in Chapter Five and then, with an understanding of his approach, Myers' model of mind, which he refers to as the "Subliminal Self" is explored in Chapter Six. For the purposes of introduction, Myers' own definition of subliminal is:

> Of thoughts, feelings lying beneath the ordinary threshold (limen) of consciousness, as opposed to supraliminal, lying above the threshold. Excitations are termed subliminal when they are too weak to rise into direct notice; and I have extended the application of the term to feeling, thought, or faculty, which is kept thus submerged, not by its own weakness, but by the constitution of man's personality. The threshold (Schwelle) must be regarded as a level above which waves may rise,—like a slab washed by the sea,—rather than as an entrance into a chamber.

The central pillar of this book is the experimental method that Myers preferred above all others, due to the versatility and fruitful results that were produced in its application. Hypnosis or "hypnotism" as Myers called it, remains a mystery to mainstream psychology that is still unable to arrive at a consensus theory to explain the enormous diversity of psychological and physiological phenomena associated with it. It is my contention that modern theorists, in their attempts to explain hypnosis as a brain-dependent psychological concept, are missing the point altogether, which is that it is a gateway to unseen and unknown realms of infinite possibility in the unfolding evolution of human consciousness. Myers did not waste time trying to understand the doorway; he took a peak through it and discovered a universe that Newtonian physics cannot accommodate. Hypnosis, used as a tool, provides a starting point for exploring the world of spirit possession. It also provides SRT with a means for releasing troublesome spirit entities from those who are adversely affected by them.

The concept of hypnosis is inextricably connected with altered states of consciousness (ASCs) mystical and religious experiences, clairvoyance and other forms of mediumship. A theoretical explanation of how the hypnotic trance or altered state of consciousness is connected with spirit possession, obsession and spirit release is offered in Chapter Seven.

How Myers applied this method to the problem of hallucinations, or what he termed "sensory automatisms" is examined in Chapter Eight where I cite examples from Myers' research that led him to conclude that telepathy and astral projection are scientifically validated phenomena. I have since discovered that more recent researchers, which I shall cite in Chapter Ten have been able to provide compelling evidence to support Myers' own conclusions.

Where Chapter Eight focuses on sensory automatisms and how they affect the individual's perceptions, Chapter Nine expands on Myers' conceptual framework to examine the effects of *automatisms* on physiology, actions and behaviour in the wider context of the mind-body problem. Linking these two concepts of *sensory* and *motor automatisms* together gives new insights into how sense impressions impact on the body and on behaviour.

Myers' Conceptual Framework and Modern Science

Mysteries remain for modern science surrounding the concept of what may loosely be called "spiritual healing" as in the laying-on of hands and the power of prayer. Extra-sensory-perception (ESP), distant mental influence (telepathy), the influence of the power of intention on living organisms (DMILS) and precognition have attracted the attention of specialist researchers, and likewise has "psychokinetics" (PK) which attempts to address the mind-matter problem. All of these discrete areas of enquiry now come under the categorisation of "psi" phenomena. It is my contention that Myers' conceptual framework is able to address all of these areas of interest, and in Part III I address the convergence of differing lines of enquiry with the aid of Myers' scientific methodology.

Chapter Ten examines the mysterious connection now identified as "psi" in the context of the possessed and the possessing entity. The connection between psi and spirit possession is something that no modern research has yet attempted. In my examination of Myers' methods and theories there is a natural progression from sensory to motor automatisms that leads us to addresses the psi connection in terms of *energy resonance*.

In my examination of the connection between Myers' theories and those of modern science I explore the differences between *magnetic rapport* (from Mesmer's theory of animal magnetism), *community of sensation* (which was Myers' term for the rapport that he hypothesised lay behind animal magnetism) and the SRT practitioners' theory of *sympathetic resonance* which offers an explanation for how spirits are attracted to people. In Chapter Ten I also introduce the concept of the power of *intention* and the *zero-point field* theory of quantum mechanics that tentatively offers a scientific approach to how the two domains of the physical and the non-physical can theoretically converge in so-called "anomalous" human experience.

Myers postulated that everything in nature, and in human experience, exists on a continuum, and that this continuum can be examined and explored using rigorous scientific methods. He felt satisfied that a start had been made in the scientific investigation of mysterious and anomalous phenomena and he recognised that there remained a long way for science to go before all mysteries were solved:

> Now it is that we feel the difficulty of being definite without being trivial; how little of earthly memory persists; how little of heavenly experience can be expressed in terms of earth; how long and arduous must be the way, how many must be the experiments, and how many the failures before any systemised body of new truth can be established. But a sound beginning has been made, and whatever may be possible hereafter need not be wasted on a fresh start.

Chapter Eleven alludes to the vast array of evidence that is continuously being accrued from modern psi research that could support the hypothesis for the existence of a spirit world and the various influences it has on the inhabitants of the material world. This is something that modern psi researchers have so far avoided attempting and although psi research is becoming a little more "fashionable" the prospect of a domain where spirits exist remains beyond the aims and objectives of the serious researcher.

Probably the greatest challenge to Myers and his supporters was in the entrenched resistance to his findings by mainstream science. Myers insisted that it is not good enough for scientists to ignore or avoid difficult issues such as those presented by somnambulists and automatists just because they themselves did not believe in the reality of what they perceived to be the "supernatural" or "occult". The same challenge is presented to investigators and researchers into the paranormal to this day.

Although spirit possession may be regarded as a phenomenon of human experience since ancient times, it is generally considered to have no place in the world of modern technology. But modern technology does, ironically, often play a part in how the spirit world communicates with our material world. Examples from research into Instrumental Voice Communication (IVC) or Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) reveal evidence that spirits can use modern technology to communicate with researchers.

Recent research into the nature of consciousness strongly reinforces the theory that the mind is not dependent on the physical brain, which in turn is supported by the principle of *non-locality* from quantum theory. These modern discoveries are continually contributing to a greater understanding of paranormal phenomena, and moreover, all of these discoveries are reinforced and supported by a revised scientific approach that is firmly grounded in the concepts and theories of Frederic Myers.

Taking a purely objective view of the overwhelming weight of evidence from a wide variety of discrete psychological, biological, and physics-

centred research disciplines, and by suspending our own personal belief systems to allow the data to speak for itself, we can arrive at an alternative view of the world that can be accommodated both by Karl Popper's evolutionary approach to the development of objective knowledge and Myers' earlier notion of the evolution of Man's consciousness. With all of these factors carefully considered, it is extremely difficult to regard mental illness from a purely *epiphenomenal* [4] foundation. Where Chapters Eleven and Twelve review the evidence for a "spirit world" and its influence on subjective experience, Chapter Thirteen uses the revised scientific framework to take a fresh look at mental illness.

Purpose of this Book

For those patients whose distress is ameliorated by the art and skill of the spirit release practitioner this book will be confirmation that the experience of spirit influence on one's health is a reality and is not to be consigned to the unsatisfactory explanation that "it is all in the mind".

Likewise the medical practitioner, psychologist, psychiatrist or any other professional whose intention it is to heal the sick, can take comfort in the evidence presented here that one does not have to "pretend" or act "as-if" what the patient experiences is real. Here is a scientific framework that can accommodate experiences ranging from spirit possession to almost imperceptible subtle influences as scientifically validated phenomena.

This book will show that Myers' scientific methodology provides a conceptual framework for modern psychiatry to better understand the subjective experiences of its patients who may be diagnosed with disorders that are resistant to traditional treatment methods. In addition it is hoped that this book will contribute new knowledge to those working in mental health services, in Christian and other religious ministries, in social science and anthropological research and to those who find themselves in the front-line of Social Services where the consequences of misguided beliefs and ignorance can interfere with the correct diagnosis and treatment of many vulnerable individuals.

This book argues that Spirit Release Therapy (SRT) fits into a scientific model that incorporates both the positivistic findings of the physical sciences, the transpersonal dimensions of subjective spiritual experience and some of the theories that attempt to explain psychic (psi) phenomena.

Spirit possession, attachment, poltergeist activity and the negative impact of obsession, infestation and harassment on psychological health, together with the methods of dealing with it are contemporary issues that demand serious scientific research and academic study. For anyone who is presented with the problem of identifying and dealing with negative spirit influence, whether they are a health professional, a service user or a research scientist, this book presents a complementary approach that is built on the theoretical concepts and experimental methods of Frederic Myers.

Part I:

Possession and Exorcism Methods and Theories

In the first part of this book I will approach the topics of possession and exorcism from contemporary perspectives in order to highlight the deficiencies in those perspectives and bring into sharp focus those questions that remain unanswered by the social sciences, medical science and mainstream psychology. I will focus on those problems and unanswered questions that impact on our collective social understanding of possession, and more importantly impact on the inability of medicine and psychology to heal the sick and suffering due to their lack of knowledge and skill in responding to such phenomena.

Chapter One

Social Science Methods in the UK and USA

Whether possession is a concept that only exists in the creative imagination of the entertainment industry, the deluded imagination of the mentally ill or the consensual beliefs of a community, social science is able to adopt methods to assess the impact on society and how its individual members are affected. Some individuals may be directly affected at great cost and suffering to themselves and their loved ones, or they may be indifferent disbelievers with no experience or knowledge of a spirit world or of spirit entities that possess people or influence their health and behaviour.

Everyone will have an opinion that is based on their knowledge and experience or the lack of it, and collectively a community will have a consensual belief or disbelief that guides their thoughts, feelings and behaviour when the topic of possession is raised. Professor Eileen Barker, Chair and Honorary Director of "INFORM" [5] writes:

> While social science cannot always know what The Truth is, it can be drawn upon to inform people of certain things that are not the case.[6] Where minority religions and alien beliefs and practices are concerned, suspicion, fear, ignorance and misinformation are rife.

The topic of possession has occupied a key position in the politics of church and state and the judicial systems in the medieval and early modern periods of European history. There have been occasions in England and Europe when decisions concerning possession have meant the difference between life and death for individuals accused of witchcraft and collusion with the Devil. But how do ideas about possession affect the way we live today? Does the subject have any importance at all apart from being a source of inspiration for horror films? Is it ever reported in the news or is it neatly sidestepped?

How society is affected may be viewed through the methodological lens of the sociologist or any other specialist social scientist, and it is through these lenses that we may be able to gather some form of sociological foundation for an understanding of what possession is and how society deals with it.

I begin this chapter with a quote from Eileen Barker in her introduction to La Fontaine's *The Devil's Children* where she elucidates the aims and objectives of the organisation INFORM that was established at the London School of Economics in 1988. INFORM is supported by all the mainstream churches and the British Government in helping to provide information that is as reliable, balanced and as up-to-date as possible about minority religions, faith movements and spiritual communities. Barker writes:

> "INFORM" relies on the methodology of the social sciences to assess the accuracy and objectivity of the data it gathers in its attempt to offer information that is more dependable than that from other sources such as section of the media, some cult-watching groups and the movements themselves, all of which may have an agenda that tends to make them somewhat selective in their accounts.

Methodological Agnosticism

Barker acknowledges that the social sciences have their limitations in that they have no expertise, technologies or skills that allow them to judge theological or ethical claims. However, this does not mean that they cannot use their methods to attempt to understand the theological and ethical beliefs of those it studies. Barker highlights the observation that social science - indeed all science - can only describe and explain empirical or natural phenomena, and has to remain "methodologically agnostic".

Scientific enquiry, according to Barker, has no way of telling whether a supernatural being can be responsible for any particular happening - whether it be God, the Devil, angels or evil spirits - and it cannot cite these concepts as independent variables. The fact that objective criteria that could be used as independent variables are missing from investigations into supernatural phenomena has led, according to Barker, to "methodological atheism" where claims of possession are explained away as "cultural expectation".

Disproving the Non-empirical

These methodological issues are no different to those that were the primary concern of Frederic Myers and his colleagues at the Society for Psychical Research over a hundred years ago, and it is for this reason that Myers' work is the focus of this book. One important scientific question raised by the concept of possession is, "How can we determine the aetiology of subjective phenomena when there is no identifiable independent variable that could be attributable as causative?"

The point being made by Barker is a reinforcement of the notion proposed by Sir Karl Popper that empirical data by its very nature cannot be used to disprove a non-empirical belief, and that the social sciences are more justified in trying to describe and understand who believes what, rather than trying to judge the truth or falsity of spiritual beliefs.

My first example of this kind of social research method is the work of Eleanor Stobart, an independent consultant and researcher. Her report was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills on child abuse linked to accusations of possession and witchcraft and first published by HMSO in 2006.

Stobart's Survey of Children Accused of Witchcraft in England

A survey of reported cases of child abuse across England that are linked to accusations of possession and exorcism has enabled Stobart to categorise recurring characteristics from the raw data and identify emergent patterns and features. Her research method was to read case reports and discuss the cases with social workers, police, teachers and voluntary workers connected with the cases.

The number of cases of child abuse linked to accusations of possession or witchcraft is very few in relation to the total number of child abuse cases known to Social Services in England. Stobart's study revealed only 74 cases from January 2000 until her report was presented in 2006, of which 38 were analysed. This is a very small sample in comparison with the 72,100 child protection enquiries received by Social Services in the year 2003 – 2004.

Stobart reports that there were 30,700 children placed on the child protection register in the year 2004 – 2005 and she makes the comment that as awareness increases so more cases are revealed. This suggests that the

true incidence of children being accused of possession and witchcraft could be significantly higher than has been revealed to date.

Stobart has been able to classify her raw data into quantitative, tabulated statistics under the headings of: age and gender of victims, UK region, ethnic origin, UK residency, religion, involvement of place of worship, family structure, child differentiation characteristics, type of accusation, type of abuse and outcomes.

Stobart's research reveals that carers often describe bad behaviour or "naughtiness" as a sign of possession. Such behaviour may include rebelliousness, disobedience, independence, defiance and developing individuality. These behaviours are typical of disenfranchised or adopted children, who feel isolated and disconnected from their caregivers, but in ethnic communities with a strong belief in possession and witchcraft there is a tendency to attribute such behaviours with evil intent, not on the part of the child but of evil forces that use the child as an instrument of evil.

Stobart's findings show that children with disabilities are often viewed as different and their disability may be explained away as possession by their families. The disabilities identified in Stobart's sample of cases include epilepsy, stammering, deafness, learning disabilities, autism, mental health issues and other life-limiting illness.

In 11 cases of the 38 there were concerns for the mental health of a carer. Illnesses included post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and schizophrenia. Three carers were sectioned under the Mental Health Act. Although there is no legitimate excuse for the abuse inflicted on children by their carers; Stobart points out that these carers genuinely believed the child to be possessed by the "devil" and that any violence is directed at the devil and not the child. These carers believed that the child was not there anymore. This concept is difficult for public sector professionals to understand and they further had difficulty in understanding how an adult carer could be so fearful of the power of a child to be so "evil" as to threaten the life of a carer. Some would assume that anyone holding such a belief must be mentally ill. Whilst only three of the carers were sectioned under the Mental Health Act all others were prosecuted as child abusers.

The relationship between possession, mental health and criminal behaviour is complex and confusing, and demands much more attention than the limitations of this book will allow. In the meantime, it may be worthwhile to note that where there is a belief in possession, there is a

possibility that the accuser is the one who is influenced by a spirit entity rather than the accused.

Projection is a psychological concept that has proven to yield positive results where confusion reigns, especially in cases of Paranoid Personality Disorder (PPD) and Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). A failure, however, to consider the possibility of spirit influence in unconscious motivation to serious criminal behaviour inevitably leaves victims of negative spirit influence, where genuine, in the long-term care of prisons and mental institutions with no prospect of any release from their agony. Examples of the failure of authorities to acknowledge the signs of negative spirit influence are provided (although not intentionally) by the forensic psychiatrist Helen Morrison from the transcripts of her recorded interviews with notorious serial killers.

In the case of John Wayne Gacy, a serial child-killer, Morrison was invited by Gacy's attorney to give evidence for the defence of insanity. Gacy's younger sister, Karen, in an interview with Morrison stated:

> I remember that once he passed out at the top of the stairs and didn't remember who he was when he came to. He was like someone who was drunk, but he wasn't drunk. Something in his voice was different. It was not his voice.

This evidence offered by Gacy's sister suggests that Gacy had either an alter-ego (or dissociated sub-personality according to the theories of DID) or was possessed by an entity other than his own. Together with many other significant clues as to what motivated Gacy, this was either ignored or overlooked by Morrison.

Manifestations of spirit influence can vary between subtle compulsions to take a destructive course of action without any conscious volition, to the terrifying intrusion of loud voices in the head giving instructions. As reported of Gacy by Morrison, "He heard a voice, a compelling, humbling voice that thundered in his head, echoing loudly". Similarly with reference to the case of Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, Morrison writes, "There is no doubt that Peter Sutcliffe used the idea of commandments from God just to kill people".

Psychiatry assumes that hearing voices that give commands to commit crimes, diagnosed as "command hallucinations" is a symptom of schizophrenia, and treatment usually involves the prescription of drugs to

overcome the voices. However, those psychiatrists who are familiar with Spirit Release techniques are aware that the cure for internal voices may not rest solely with medication, but require the release of the invading spirit from the patient. In contrast, the following quotation from Morrison gives a clear and unambiguous message that she believes that such voices are always the creations of a diseased mind:

> When these killers hear voices from God, what they're really hearing is only their own inner voice, imagined permutations of what's in their own minds.

The relationship between spirit possession, witchcraft, mental health and criminality is only marginally referred to in Stobart's study where care givers have been found guilty of physically abusing the child in order to drive out perceived demons. However, it does open an avenue for investigation that must wait until these concepts are taken seriously by dedicated researchers and when funding is made available for serious further investigation. [7]

In summary, Stobart's study highlights the problems with *beliefs* in possession in the identified ethnic groups and offers recommendations to avoid negative outcomes. The abuse occurs when violent forms of exorcism are attempted. Stobart therefore makes recommendations for public service agencies to be in closer contact with those voluntary sector groups with which immigrant families are more likely to turn when in need of help. When the exorcism is attempted it is already too late. Schools and teachers are better positioned to become aware of anything wrong before serious abuse occurs.

Stobart acknowledges that it is not possible to change deep-seated beliefs about possession and witchcraft when they are an endemic factor in the culture and religious belief system. [8]

Stobart recommends a centralised information system on all cases of reported abuse linked with possession and witchcraft that can be accessed by all agencies including police and social services, although she is not specific on how that data should be collected and presented as routine. Her report recommends that places of worship need to have child protection policies in place, together with procedures for best practice in deliverance or exorcism.

In order for a meaningful picture of possession and accusations of witchcraft to be produced, data collection would need to conform to a defined format that enables the dissemination of information in tabulated form for trend analysis and intervention efficacy. Below I have constructed an example of how data can be tabulated even from the primitive personal records of an interventionist; in this case the eighteenth-century exorcist Father Johann Joseph Gassner.

Although the data presented below could hardly be described as rigorous or scientific, it does show some of the complaints that Father Gassner treated with religious exorcism with a degree of success. What is important is that we, as a society, need to know to what extent possession is a problem, and what are the resources and recourses of action that are currently in use by various groups and individuals to deal with it?

Table 1-1 Sample of Gassner's Cures

Complaint	Male	Female	Unknown Gender
Epilepsy	2	8	3
Sick	4	7	1
Chest & Heart	3	2	0
Fevers	7	7	Many
Blind	5	4	
Deaf	0	1	
Throat	0	1	
Head and Face	2	5	
Womb	0	1	
Crippled, Lame	13	16	
Cramps & Paralysis	1	2	
Pains	4	1	2
Dead	0	1	
Cancer	0	1	
Mad	10	11	
Stomach, Vomiting	1	2	
Consumption	0	1	
Marital impediment	1	1	
Lockjaw	0	1	
Leprosy	0	2	
Could not eat	1	1	
Unknown	1	0	62
Totals	56	76	70

Stobart had no contact with victims or perpetrators. Information came solely from public services and voluntary agencies connected with the cases. The views and opinions collected are therefore representative of observers, and there are no expressed opinions, testimonies or beliefs of the victims, perpetrators of abuse, traditional ethnic healers or church ministers

who practice deliverance or exorcism. This inevitably produces a report that is biased by the opinions, assumptions and beliefs of observers of the negative consequences of inappropriate action against children accused of possession or witchcraft.

Where the beliefs and assumptions of observers make no provision for a belief in possession; it makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate the levels of fear experienced by those who do feel threatened by demonic forces. In contrast, if an observer were to become a participant and actually experience what it feels like to be possessed by an external intelligence with evil intent, then all assumptions and beliefs would change and the whole issue would be viewed from a completely different perspective.

Impact of Entertainment in the USA

Partly funded by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the anthropologist and sociologist Michael Cuneo conducted research into the phenomenon of demonic possession in North America during the 1970s, 80s and 1990s. Cuneo highlights the public paranoia created during the 1970s by the publication of William Blatty's book *The Exorcist* in 1971 followed by the film of the same title in 1973, and by Malachi Martin's book, *Hostage to the Devil* which depicted in graphic detail five cases of alleged demonic possession in the modern United States.

In order to negate any bias that may have been created in his mind by the dramatization of Blatty's and Martin's works, Cuneo's research method was to witness for himself actual exorcism rituals performed by authorised and unauthorised Catholic exorcists, together with lay self-appointed individuals and ministers of the Neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches, and to personally interview retired practitioners of exorcism and deliverance. The result of Cuneo's investigation is a more balanced overview than Stobart's in that he highlighted both the negative and positive outcomes of sensationalist reporting in the media and the social hysteria created from the dramatization of reality for the benefit of the entertainment industry.

Cuneo discovered several factors that contributed to the peak of hysteria around Satanism and demonic possession in the 1970s that was maintained and reinforced through the 80s and well into the 1990s. Among them was

the disturbing case of the murder of Sharon Tate by Charles Manson and the release of the satanic film, *Rosemary's Baby* by Roman Polanski in 1968.

In comparison with the cases examined in England by Stobart above, the American news media exploited the fear associated with stories of satanic ritual abuse, whereas in England the news media focussed on the failings of Social Services.

Cuneo asserts that it was the entertainment industry in its over-dramatization of the notion of demonic possession that drove people in their thousands to seek exorcism from the Catholic Church and deliverance from Protestant Pentecostalism. Neo-Pentecostal churches responded with the introduction of deliverance rituals into their practices and the Catholic Church, after strong denial and resistance, eventually succumbed to the pressure of public demand and acceded to an increase in the appointment of official exorcists. The church also, extraordinarily, acceded to permit the live broadcasting on April 22nd 1998 of the exorcism of a sixteen year-old girl.

Cuneo maintains that where the entertainment media were responsible for over-dramatization which led to public paranoia, eventually it was responsible for the Catholic Church's open acknowledgement that, although rare, demonic possession was a reality and they had an obligation to provide the solution where and when it was justified. Cuneo reports that the Catholic Church openly acknowledged that demonic possession and exorcism are a real but rare occurrence. Furthermore, his reporting on the experiences of ministers of deliverance in the charismatic movement presents the view that interference from supernatural evil forces is more common that most people would like to admit. It seems that the fear of demonic forces can be justified if the resources to deal with it are known and made available. However, the danger lies in creating mass hysteria and not providing the resources to deal with the panic.

A positive outcome some 20 years after the furore created by Blatty's book, was that a true and accurate account of the factual case of "Robbie Mannheim" a 14 year-old boy (on which Blatty's book and film were based) was written by investigative journalist Thomas Allen in 1994. Using the original journal written by an attendant Jesuit priest who was an eyewitness, Allen produced a de-fictionalised account that was devoid of false drama or embellishments.

Some of Allen's comments from the preface of the 2000 edition of the book are worthy of note. For instance, he speaks of how the film *The Exorcist* reached deep into the unconscious and stirred up "nameless fears" in many who viewed it. He further comments that following a viewing of the film many people had to seek therapy to rid them of fears they could not explain and psychiatrists were writing about cases of what they began calling, "cinematic neurosis".

Thomas Allen's observation revealed something that Michael Cuneo's investigations failed to. The cinematic dramatization of Blatty's book seems to have touched a nerve in the psyche of many otherwise rational human beings to the extent that it made them psychologically ill. This is not just a good example of the very real effects of an *idea* imposed onto a suggestible public. More than that; this suggests that the fear-behaviour created is similar to the fear exhibited by infant primates (chimpanzees) the very first time they see a snake. This is not a learned fear but an instinctual one. The suggestion is that human beings have an instinctual fear of the demonic, and this would go a long way to explain a compulsion for its fascination.

Cuneo makes it very clear in his assessment that the belief systems and "expectations" of people play an extremely important role in their perception and their experience. He writes:

> Most people who seek out an exorcism are suffering from some psychological or emotional problem that they're convinced has been caused by demons. They believe that demons are just as real, if not quite so obvious, as anything else in the world and that only through an exorcism will their problem be eliminated and their circumstances improved. They anticipate walking away from the exorcism with a new lease on life. The person charged with performing the exorcism and the supporting cast of friends, family members, and assistants anticipate the same thing. All parties to the exorcism have an enormous investment in the affair: They want it to work, they expect it to work, they pray for it to work. The symbolic universe they inhabit, with its shared religious meanings and discourse, demands that it work. It doesn't always work of course, but often enough (if only temporarily) it seems to. And little wonder – exorcism is a ritualised placebo, a placebo writ large, one that engages its participants on levels to which more conventional therapeutic procedures could scarcely aspire.

Cuneo claims to have undertaken his research with the "open-minded Canadian scepticism" of the anthropologist who needed to understand the

mass hysteria surrounding demonic possession and exorcism. Having witnessed more than fifty exorcisms, it is interesting that he was still unable to answer the definitive question of whether demons are real or imagined. Cuneo claims to have been open-minded but sceptical about the prospect of witnessing demonic possession and exorcism as they were portrayed in Blatty's film:

> I wasn't expecting to encounter demons – especially not the ripsnorting, mind-blowing demons of popular imagination – but I was entirely open to being surprised. If something happened during an exorcism that defied rational explanation, that seemed to reek of supernatural evil, I was committed to reporting it. Hell, I would have been happy reporting it. But nothing happened – at least nothing startling, nothing that reached out and grabbed me by the throat.

It is my own opinion that Cuneo is making a fundamental error. Although he claims to be an open-minded sceptic, he is still influenced by the popular misconception, reinforced by dramatic entertainment that all cases of possession are like those depicted in Blatty's film and others of the genre. Cases that are as dramatic as that depicted in *The Exorcist* are rare, though the fact that this film was loosely based on a factual case shows that such cases do occur in the real world. The case of "Anneliese Michel" is another real-life case that has been presented to the public in two films: *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* in 2005 and *Requiem* in 2006.

The point is this: just because a serious researcher does not witness what he or she may expect to witness, does not mean that it does not exist. There are a sufficient number of documented cases of demonic possession on record to provide evidence for the phenomenon to be recognised as a significant event in human experience. How these phenomena are explained is another matter, and it is these explanations that science should be concerned with rather than dismissing them out-of-hand with no serious hypothesis testing. Those reported cases where the host's body is disfigured beyond the known laws of biology strongly suggest that the phenomenology of spirit possession is not purely psychological.

SRT practitioners do not usually have to deal with cases that are documented and classified as contravening the laws of physics and biology as we currently know them, but they do encounter less dramatic cases that cause distress and suffering to their patients. Whether the demons that

plague their patients have ontological reality or are autogenic is open to scientific scrutiny. Cuneo was unable to verify whether the demons that he witnessed being exorcised were real or imagined, and whether the cure was exorcism or another form of psychological placebo. What does appear to be real, however, was the fear in those who believed in their existence. With regard to many of those who subjected themselves to therapeutic exorcism or deliverance, he writes:

> Their depression lifted, their fears fled, their inner torments dissipated, their blues melted away. I have no way of knowing how extensive this improvement was, or how long lived. ...it's quite possible that exorcism actually works, but it may have nothing to do with driving out demons.

Cuneo's conclusions reinforce the opinions of scientists and mainstream psychiatrists that possession is a form of psychological dysfunction and that exorcism is a placebo remedy. As I commented earlier on the work of Stobart, raw data collected by observation and interview can be categorised and tabulated to provide insights into trends in the incidence of cases and their phenomenological characteristics. Cuneo's work would have had more value if he had compiled an efficacy table of the results of the exorcisms he had personally witnessed and subjected them to statistical analysis.

Fear of the demonic was endemic in the Middle-Ages, and as a sociologist, Cuneo reports that similar fear of the demonic reached levels of mass hysteria in the 1970s and 80s in middle-class America. What remains to be identified is the *object* of this fear. Is this fear justified by the presence of a real demonic threat, or a projection of an inherent weakness in the spiritual psychology of human mass consciousness? The answer to this question could, as we shall see, lie within those findings of Myers that even he was astonished to uncover through his rigorous research methods.

There are other very important questions to consider here. For instance: can a person be possessed by some spirit entity other than a devil or demon? Can a person be possessed by the spirit of a deceased person, or by the conscious will of another living person, or by a self-created demon as an instrument for self-punishment, or by a curse placed upon them by another person who may be living or dead? There are ways of discovering the answers to these questions and during the course of this examination I will explore the scientific foundation that is required to answer them.

Conflicts in Scientific Frameworks

The development of research methodology involves the incorporation of additional concepts as well as expanded theories and the testing of hypotheses. Cuneo's study is representative of an observational study that included the witnessing of exorcism and deliverance rituals and interviewing in-depth those who experienced possession and those who administered to it. Where Cuneo's study fell short was in the fact that he remained an observer. His study lacked *subjective* experience. Modern science claims to be objective and must therefore ignore subjectivity. However, I assert that experience is an essential component, not only in the quest for greater understanding, but also in the accuracy of scientific research and analysis. My assertion is reinforced by Diesing's academic treatise on the *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*. On the process of developing an effective participant-observer method Diesing writes:

> The procedure is, first, to become socialized into the system, to learn a set of roles and normative elements, to form relationships, and thus to participate in the normal routines and occasional crises of the system. If the system is small, the researcher can gradually turn himself into an analogue of the system, so that he reacts as it reacts, feels as it feels, thinks and evaluates as it does. The next step is to make this implicit knowledge "personal knowledge" explicit. The researcher constructs hypotheses about parts of the system out of the recurrent themes that come to his attention and tests these hypotheses against a variety of data – what he sees, what others tell him, how he reacts, and how others react to his probing actions. Many detailed hypotheses are gradually combined into a model of the whole system, whose parts are tested by how well they fit together and how well they agree with the data.

The social surveys of both Stobart and Cuneo lack the dimension of observer-participation as briefly described above by Diesing, and it is for this reason that in the following chapter I give careful consideration to the importance of the personal experience of possession.

On the value of clinical experience with specific regard to spirit possession, the Swiss psychiatrist Hans Naegeli-Osjord writes:

> It should be emphasised that critics who lack any experience of their own are trained only in the traditional sciences will have no valid basis for evaluating the phenomena of

> possession and exorcism, but some will do it anyhow. Their belief in the widely accepted "knowledge" provides enough motivation. I would like to provide some food for thought: "*In order to reach the source, one has to swim against the current."*

Naegeli-Osjord is making a point of importance with his metaphor of going against the current. This metaphor has a double meaning; to go against the current of mainstream opinion, *and* to move towards the *source* of a problem rather than focus on symptoms. In other words, consider carefully what is the "cause" rather than consign the presenting symptoms to a diagnosis that could be wrong.

Sociological studies are limited in the information they can provide because of the restrictions on their ability to test hypotheses. Social science is essentially observational and unable to fully empathise with the meaning of beliefs and experiences unless the observer has similar beliefs and experiences.

Stobart's study shows the damage that can be done to children by inappropriate action by caregivers who believe in witchcraft, and what Cuneo's study shows is the power of *belief*, *expectation* and *suggestion* on some sections of society who he considered to be susceptible to the power of dramatic entertainment. The concepts of belief, expectation and suggestion are powerful contributors to human experience, and these concepts will arise continuously throughout this book.

Chapter Two

Conflicting Theories of Possession in Cross-Cultural Studies

Positive Possession

Willing hosts see themselves as intermediaries between this world and the world of spiritual beings and are appropriately named *mediums* by spiritualists. They may be controlled or possessed by discarnate human entities or other intelligent entities during the rituals of some occult traditions. Participants may give themselves freely to be possessed by a god or goddess, a process which may be referred to as "magical invocation" that is practised in order to gain knowledge or power to promote personal growth or healing for others.

Anthropology psychiatrist Roland Littlewood makes the distinction between *voluntary* and *involuntary* possession states. He uses examples of voluntary possession states that are typical in Africa, such as *Sar* in East Africa, *Bori* in West Africa, the Afro-Caribbean *Santeria* of Cuba, Trinidadian *Shango*, Haitian *Vodou*, and the Afro-Brazilian cults of *Candomble* and *Umbanda*. Each has its own characteristic pattern of beliefs and practices when spirit entities are invited to interact with the participants in the rituals. In contrast, involuntary possession is less standardised and the experience is damaging in the course of everyday life, causing illness or madness.

Positive Possession in Wicca

Positive possession is not confined to tribal communities in what we in the West may see as "developing" countries. In the UK, according to practising Wicca adherent Christina Harrington; "Wicca is a nature based initiatory religion with a theology centred around two cosmic deities known as the Goddess and the God". Practitioners of the Wicca religion believe in a largely benevolent spirit world, and they believe that the body of the

dedicated can be taken over and shared with the gods. Wicca therefore employs the practice of deliberate possession by gods and goddesses.

Harrington's first-hand experience of the ceremony of *Drawing Down the Moon* provides an important perspective in gaining a fuller understanding of the subjective meaning and emotive qualities of positive possession in contrast to a phenomenological approach which generally avoids the central concerns of the society or group under scrutiny. Prior to her own possession by the deity, Harrington describes the emotional connection with the high priestess as she witnessed her first *Drawing Down* ceremony:

> Once an initiate, I could attend the private secret rituals. As I recall, it was at the first ritual after my initiation that I first saw what we call "the Drawing Down of the Moon". The high priestess of the group had the Goddess of Wicca called into her, and the Goddess was made present in her body. In that possessed state, she spoke a beautiful inspired speech that I recall as being poetic and deeply emotionally moving.

Preparations and Subjective Experience of Positive Possession

Harrington's description of the preparations for her own initiation into the possession rite draws attention to the principle of protection from unwelcome spirit agencies and to the pantheistic nature of the religion:

> We met in a temple room, and there were about ten people present in a chalk marked circle. The Wiccan circle – the sacred space that keeps out undesirable forces whilst containing the power of the ceremony – had previously been blessed with consecrated salt water, and protective guardian spirits were called forth to guard the rite. These protective spirits act as sentinels of protection against any unwelcome supernatural forces that might be about; and whilst for us the unseen realms are not believed to be filled with evil forces, we do not want undesirable or incompatible presences in our place of working, particularly when we are working with possession rites. In Christianity these are the four archangels; the guardians of our tradition are ancestral forces, also associated with the four elements of earth, air, fire and water.

Consecrating salt water with a blessing is the same formula used by the Christian Church for producing holy water. The context of blessing the sacred circle with blessed salt water is precisely the same as the use of holy

water in protection and other sacraments in the Christian Church. In all religions that believe in possession the precautions and rituals for protection from unwanted or evil spirit interference is virtually universal, and I have little doubt that this is the origin of the Christian ritual of naming the new-born child with the sacrament of baptism which is an essential component of the Catholic ritual of exorcism. On the protection from universal forces, the experienced psychic Dion Fortune declares:

> We live in the midst of invisible forces whose affects alone we perceive. We move among invisible forms whose actions we very often do not perceive at all, though we may be profoundly affected by them.

Fortune's advice is offered to everyone who is unaware of the negative influences of a spirit world and the destructive intentions of those who know how to use the black arts, but David Ashworth's warnings and methods of protection are directed specifically to the practitioner of those complementary therapies that would be considered as a part of the "New-Age" spiritual movement. In contrast to Christian and other religious protection rituals, SRT practitioners are not known for using holy water in their procedures or drawing circles or pentagrams on the floor (although it is possible that some do). However, the precautions for protection normally do include a procedure whereby the space being used for the release of attached spirits from clients is declared in some way as a *sacred space*, usually with the invocation of *Divine Light*. Protection from negative spirit forces is a recurring theme in all rituals that involve the intentional invocation of spirits, and is of prime importance in the healing practices of Spirit Release Practitioners.

A Common Characteristic – the Altered State

A recurring characteristic of all forms of possession, whether they are positive and invited or negative and uninvited is the phenomenon of the *altered state of consciousness*. According to Harrington: "Everyone in the ritual needs to be in a *heightened state* in order to be receptive to the God". The importance of the altered state is relevant to the scientific methods applied by Myers in his experiments with his subjects, and I shall explore his method of using the altered state later in Chapter Seven, *Hypnosis as Experimental Method*.

In an altered state of consciousness, the experience becomes more emotionally profound, and it is this deep profound emotional quality that is missing from observers' reports.

The connection between the Wicca experience of possession by the Goddess (the God for male devotees) and mystical or transcendental experience as a *heightened* state is provided by Harrington as she describes her participation in the ritual for the high priestess' possession:

> A serenity came upon me, and I was somehow at one with the whole cosmos. I saw a woman I knew, a gracious and serene woman in her sixties; yet she was transformed; she looked like herself, but was also infinite. And then she spoke these words, hers but yet not hers. I was moved by a sense of being beyond the world.... I felt touched by the most tender force imaginable, and I felt that whatever happened to me – for the rest of my life – all would be well, for she was with me always. ...When it was over, the priestess then became herself again.

Harrington's own experience of being possessed by the goddess describes a deeper mystical experience that incorporates a sense of being *out of body*:

> I never felt that I was losing myself, but rather that the part of me that is caught up in daily life linked to (and embraced into) a more still and eternal Me, which in turn is a part of a divine universe. My consciousness pulled back into a night sky, so eventually I was looking down at a young woman's body, and seeing her look at a man kneeling before her. I saw all this through the eyes of a Goddess, not through personal eyes. When I spoke the words of the Charge, the poetry came through me from a far greater place than I had ever been able to imagine.

By Harrington's description of her experience it can be appreciated that she did not experience full possession whereby she loses all sense of herself as one would if they were completely taken over by a possessing spirit. In contrast she experienced being herself and more than herself and goes on to say:

> If we get it right, the individual is at once themselves and something far, far beyond themselves. As pantheists, we believe that this is really true about each person, whether or not they are experiencing it consciously. Being part of a tradition where one witnesses, and then participates in deity trance possession, gives us a ceremonial, regular reminder of the

> fact that we believe in the sacredness of each individual. Surely this is something that could only be described as a sacrament.

The interaction between host and the spirit entity can be seen on a continuum from subtle mental influence in thought impressions, symbolism and ideas at one end; to full possession at the other where the host relinquishes conscious control and the entity uses the body and mind of the host in totality.

From a more objective perspective, the characteristics of Harrington's experience point to a mediated ritual of organised religious practice that results in a mystical experience of connection with a divine being. Her own description of something ineffable and being in touch with something greater than herself offers clues that would classify her experience as mystical. According to mysticism scholar, Evelynn Underhill:

> True mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical. It is an organic life process, a something which the whole self does.

It is for this reason that the study of mysticism has an important contribution to make in explaining what Harrington is saying. Theories of mystical experience play a central role in linking the practical application of Myers' methods and theories with William James' philosophical approach to the scientific study of religion. Myers did not believe that science was the only means of acquiring knowledge, but that contemplation, revelation, mystical experience and intuition can produce profound truths.

A detailed study of the biographies of many scientists would reveal that they had profound mystical experiences. William James and Pierre Janet are excellent examples. In Janet's own autobiography he declared that he felt that he had to make a choice between mysticism and science, and to be recognised as a serious psychiatrist he decided to build his reputation as a scientist. Since the emergence of the scientific enlightenment it has become increasingly unfashionable for scientists to declare their interest in mysticism, and those who do acknowledge it tend to keep it to themselves.

Voluntary Possession in a Branch of Christianity

Mercy Magbagbeola, originally from Nigeria, is a social worker and mental health assessor working with the English Social Services. She uses her

knowledge of the beliefs and customs of her native Nigeria, together with her gift of prophecy through possession by the Holy Spirit in her work as a prophetess in the Celestial Church of Christ with the Nigerian community in a district of London. Magbagbeola's testimony of the experience of being an instrument of the Holy Spirit offers an informative example of positive possession. In addition she has valuable knowledge and experience of the profound belief systems held by many diaspora that originate in African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

Magbagbeola describes her gift as, "hearing messages from God, either as a clear vision or as God speaking directly into my heart". She goes on to say that:

> As Christians we are all filled with the Holy Spirit but possession, according to our faith, is attributed to the Powers of Darkness or to affliction by a demonic power.

The relationship between possession and witchcraft is described by Magbagbeola according to her own experiences and belief system:

> A witch has demonic power as the human agent of Satan; some know about it, others do not. But they cannot control it; they are controlled by it. Witchcraft may be handed on from a senior generation; mothers may even give the power to practise witchcraft to a child before they die if they have no one else to give it to. Children can be as powerful as witches as adults, but sometimes if they are given the powers of witchcraft it lies dormant until puberty. Witches use the power of darkness. Sickness that cannot be healed, barrenness, working hard (like an elephant as we say) but getting nowhere – all this can be caused by witchcraft. They plan evil by night but their actions are carried out by day. Witches can use their power to affect specified places such as Islington or more widely to affect London or even cause a natural catastrophe like a tsunami .

It is unfortunate that statements like the one in the last sentence above are taken as evidence that adepts like Magbagbeola are suffering from delusions in everything they say. There is a tendency to discount every statement made by a person on the basis that it is supernatural nonsense when just one statement stretches the imagination beyond the limits of commonplace views of reality, so that the proverbial baby is subsequently thrown out with the bathwater. Magbagbeola is in danger of leaving herself

open to the theoretical claim that all who experience such things are mentally ill, when she herself declares that:

> If people show signs of thought disorders, that is their words do not make sense, even in terms of their own culture, or what they say is quite impossible, then they are not possessed and need psychiatric treatment.

If, by using her gift of discernment through the Holy Spirit, Mercy has cause to believe that someone is possessed, or rightly accused of witchcraft as she defines it, then the person (sometimes a child) is brought to the appropriate place of worship where the remedy is affected:

> Only if children's abnormal behaviour coincides with misfortune in their family are children thought of as witches. Beating them will not change anything; only the power of prayer, the power of the Word, the power of the Name and the blood of the Cross could rid them of the evil.

She continues:

> The solution for those who are not mentally ill concerns God. The pastor will pray over the prophet or prophetess who will receive the Holy Spirit which will descend upon them and give them the solution which must be written down and carried out to the letter.

When Mercy Magbagbeola describes her experience of communicating with the Holy Spirit for guidance she is in effect describing her experience of an altered state of consciousness, or trance:

> If God wants me to see something, I will stop seeing you and I will see whatever it is God wants me to see. Within that space of time, those two minutes, I will not know what is happening around me, because I will be cut off from it. When the vision is over, I will come round and I will be able to write down what God has revealed.

The perceived reality of her experience and the firmly grounded belief system of her community is summarised in her statement:

> This is our reality. It is not just gossip and it is not just odd ideas, it happens in people's lives.

The Celestial Church of Christ is a branch of a syncretistic religion that merges primitive tribal beliefs with Christian theology. Even though Christian missionaries were able to introduce Christianity to primitive peoples in Africa, they were often unable to replace primitive beliefs with Christian doctrine, and consequently their original belief system became integrated with Christian teaching. The result is a religion that still holds beliefs about spirits, witchcraft and possession, but with Christian resolutions, rather than more primitive ones that involve witch doctors or shamans. A similar thing could be said about our own traditions in the Anglican Church. [9] It must therefore be acknowledged that religious beliefs and traditions, although their origin may be lost to conscious thought, still persist in the collective consciousness of a community. Roland Littlewood, a psychiatrist with training in anthropology, is aware of the tensions between these different discourses and advises physicians to be aware of them:

> While treating the underlying major psychiatric condition, if any, the physician must remain sensitive to the cultural issues, couched as they may be in a totally alien medium. It is unwise to directly contradict a patient's or relative's statements about the reality of spirit possession, but instead to offer any psychiatric treatment (including pharmaceutical drugs) as something which experience has taught the doctor to protect against spirit attack.

In order to get to the truth, whether a phenomenon of mental illness or spirit possession, it is important to take into consideration the scientific framework of the culture concerned, together with the preconceived ideas of the observer or commentator, and then consider the interpretation of the experience.

Those theories that are likely to be applied to the experiences of both Harrington and Magbagbeola would include the socio-cultural, auto-suggestion, hysteria and cognitive-error theories of spirit possession. These theories are products of the scientific paradigm that discards the possibility of the existence of a spiritual realm. The theories of Frederic Myers and William James considered an alternative hypothesis that they sought to test, and they would attempt to deduce whether the experienced psychic phenomena originated in a part of the psychological self or from an external spirit entity.

Modern psychology could use the methods it has at its disposal to test the efficacy of the methods of discernment and resolution that are used by the Celestial Church of Christ and other healing ministries in the treatment of alleged possession and witchcraft. All that is required is to collect information on the diagnosis, the method of intervention and the outcome – just as Gassner did in the 1700s and just as all medical practitioners do with accepted diseases and remedies.

With particular regard to the methods of the Celestial Church of Christ, the question that I seek to pose is, "How efficacious are the remedies offered by the Holy Spirit (or whoever it is that speaks), and how can the efficacy of similar interventions be measured?" This is a serious question, and one that I feel should be addressed by modern science.

The common theme in the invited practice of positive possession in both Wicca and the Celestial church of Christ is the *intention* of asking for guidance from a higher source for healing. It is this theme of intention that I will address later in Chapter Ten. I also pose the question: what are the similarities between the ritual of *Drawing Down the Moon* in Wicca and possession by the *Holy spirit* in the Celestial Church of Christ with those of Spirit Release Therapy, with Christian Spiritualism and with the Spiritism methods used in the institutionalised medicine of Brazil?

It makes little difference whether a person with the *intention* to heal his or her fellow human is a devotee of Wicca, Christianity, Haitian Voodoo, Spiritualism, Spiritism, or any other religious, mystical or spiritual tradition, because there are common characteristics that can be identified to bring them all together as spiritual healing practices. In addition to the *intention* of the healer and the host of a possessing entity, the other significant characteristic is the *altered state of consciousness*.

The Shamanic Journey & Soul Loss

Spirit possession is the most widely held *mystical* interpretation of trance and of other associated conditions. The other major mystical theory is that which attributes these states to the temporary absence of the victim's soul, and is consequently known in anthropology as "soul-loss". Spirit possession and/or soul-loss, (depending on the cultural interpretation) are the two principal mystical explanations. Lewis reports that the culturally determined emphasis on soul-loss, rather than spirit possession, is a strongly developed motif in many North American Indian societies. The psychologist and

medical anthropologist Alberto Villoldo, reports on soul-loss in traumatised children:

> Among Hispanic and Native American communities throughout the U.S., when children suffer from *Susto* (fright), they are taken to a special place to retrieve the part of their soul that was lost or taken from them.

Villoldo spent twenty five years studying the healing practices of the Amazon and Inca shamans. His personal experiences of the traditional rites of passage of these indigenous peoples, and of being trained in shamanic healing arts have enabled him to adapt and translate these practices within a modern scientific context.

Villoldo draws a parallel between the time taken to train a medical practitioner in Western medicine and a shamanic healer respectively. He has taken what he has learned through practice under the guidance of respected shamanic healers, and translated its principles and procedures into the modern language of Jungian psychology, where he applies them in healing practice and written works. He declares that his practice is “extraordinarily powerful and effective, and must only be used with the strongest code of ethics and integrity”.

The Jungian scholar Leon Schlamm reminds us that journeys into the shamanic mythic realm through Jung’s concept of “active imagination” can be a dangerous practice:

> Jung was well aware that the practitioner of active imagination who was unable to maintain a differentiated, self-reflective conscious point of view in the face of unconscious visionary material would be vulnerable to mental illness: either in the form of psychosis where consciousness is overwhelmed by unconscious visionary materials; or in the form of conscious identification with numinous unconscious contents leading to possession by them.

Similarly, Villoldo draws a direct corollary between shamanic journeying and Jung’s active imagination journeying into the unconscious, and it is not difficult to see why he emphasises the importance of training for the shamanic journey with experienced master teachers. The act of altering our state of awareness from the everyday normal consciousness to an altered state that facilitates access to other realms can be spontaneous and

unmediated in the vulnerable person and can lead to mental disturbances or possession by archetypal unconscious contents, as Jung warns.

Villoldo is representative of those anthropologists and psychologists who have taken that all-important step in developing cognitive, emotive and social relationships with those he studies, in accordance with the ethnographic research ethos of Diesing.

The consequence of Villoldo's personal participation (not just in the life and culture of the community, but also in the esoteric healing arts) is that he has taken what is of value and applied it for his own benefit and the benefit of others in his own culture; and instead of merely fulfilling the generally accepted role of an anthropologist or psychologist, he has become a healer in the shamanic tradition – in other words a neo-shaman with a Jungian perspective.

It was Myers' belief that the rituals of shamans of less technologically-developed cultures than our own were a valuable route of enquiry in the late nineteenth century, and it is my contention, in agreement with Myers, that this avenue is still available to us today. Furthermore, it is through understanding the relationship between the observed trance and shamanic healing that we can gain a deeper understanding of those mystical or anomalous occurrences that ordinary people in all cultures throughout the civilised and not-so civilised world experience in their everyday lives.

According to the modern transpersonal psychologist Professor David Fontana, the rapid technological developments of the past 300 years have progressively alienated modern Western man from his biological and spiritual roots. He further comments that living much closer to nature, and to three of the areas that linked humankind to nature – birth, procreation and death – than the modern Westerner, people in less developed cultures grow with an enhanced *sensitivity* to their environment. Fontana reinforces the importance of experience by saying that:

> … sensitivity of this kind depends greatly upon *experience* in order to develop a set of skills that can be applied to healing practices. Without such experience the potential may be irretrievably lost.

It is in agreement with David Fontana, Paul Diesing, Hans Naegeli-Osjord and William James that I have persistently reinforced the importance of personal subjective experience in coming to terms with, and understanding

the concept of spirit possession. I would argue that in the modern world we have become insulated from our natural environment to the degree that we have relinquished our *sensitivity* to the ultimate reality of the spiritual dimension.

We may think of this sensitivity in terms of a heightened "physical" awareness because of the physical sensations associated with emotions, such as "gut-feelings" and "racing heart". But, according to Fontana the cultures concerned speak of "non-physical" awareness, one that renders them receptive to realities beyond normal ways of seeing and hearing. It is thought that this awareness allows contact with the spirits of the dead, either through apparitions or dreams.

Particularly gifted individuals are able to make contact at will, even travelling in some cases to the dimensions where these spirits are said to exist. These gifted individuals are known to Western anthropologists as shamans. There is ample evidence that many respected anthropologists have taken this claim seriously, including Joan Halifax, a medical anthropologist and author of scholarly research into the subject including *Shamanic Voices*, Felicitas Goodman who has written on the value of shamanic ritual in accessing an alternate reality and Alberto Villoldo.

In addition, David Peat, a theoretical physicist, expertly reconciles shamanism with natural science and Jungian psychology. On the relationship between the experience of shamanic journeying and Jung's archetypes, Peat writes:

> Many of the symbols found in the indigenous science of the Americas (the tree, four sacred directions, fire, serpent, bear, rock, sacred plants, sacred animals, worlds within worlds, etc.), are shared by indigenous peoples across the earth and are found in records left by the peoples of prehistoric times. The psychologist Carl Jung associated these with archetypes of the collective unconscious, but to the native mind they are not metaphors, images, representations, or archetypes. Rather they are reality itself.

Many of the concepts contained in Jungian psychology appear to have a direct relationship with shamanism, mysticism and spirit possession, and it is with these observations in mind that a greater understanding of these relationships may be of advantage to the modern Jungian analyst or scholar.

Chapter Three

Eye-Witness Testimony - Is Seeing Believing?

> When we speak of an abnormal phenomenon we do not mean one which contravenes natural laws, but one which exhibits them in an unusual or inexplicable form (Frederic Myers, 1885).

The methods of discernment - that is the art of distinguishing whether a person is suffering from some form of spirit interference or whether they are mentally ill - is introduced in this chapter in order to demonstrate the difficulties that are presented to psychiatrists who lack the knowledge and skills of discernment.

I cite an example from the case files of the contemporary psychiatrist, M. Scott Peck who witnessed and participated in the Roman Catholic rite of exorcism of two of his own patients. First I cite the case of "Jersey" in order to demonstrate difficulties in discernment, and later in this chapter I introduce Peck's second case, that of "Beccah" to challenge eye-witness testimony with several different hypotheses.

Categories of Possession on a Continuum

Father Johann Joseph Gassner (1727-1779), a Jesuit exorcist in eighteenth-century Germany, distinguished between two different types of illness: "natural" ones that belonged to the realm of the physician, and "preternatural" ones which he divided into three separate categories: (a) *circumsessio* - what appeared to be a natural illness but was caused by the devil; (b) *obsession* - the effect of sorcery; and (c) *possession* – that is overt diabolic/demonic possession, the least frequent of the three forms, and the

most dramatic. In Chapter One I presented a brief representative table of some of the illnesses categorised as (a) *circumsessio* that Gassner claimed were healed by his method of exorcism by prayer and the authority of the name of Christ. This leaves two remaining categories according to Gassner – obsession and possession. But these remaining categories are not sufficient to accommodate the diversity of alleged demonic afflictions.

Mathew Baglio, an American investigative journalist living in Rome, attended the Catholic School for Exorcists in order to experience the training for himself. In his personal account, *The Rite*, published in 2009 he reports that in 1998, the Conference of Italian Bishops asked the International Association of Exorcists to come up with a list of terms that could be used by everybody. The categorisation they collectively agreed upon is: (1) infestation, (2) oppression, (3) obsession, and (4) demonic possession. But exorcists also assert that the devil is most active in its capacity to "tempt us to do what we do not want and what is not right". The so-called "ordinary" activity of the devil is by far the most common according to Father Gabriel Amorth, retired senior exorcist to the Vatican, who writes:

> ...how great – and growing – is the demand for exorcists. ...First why is there such a high demand for exorcists? Can we make the case that the demon is more active today than in the past? Can we say that the incidence of demonic possession and other, lesser, evil disturbances is on the rise? The answer to this and similar questions is a decisive Yes. Rationalism, atheism – which is preached to the masses – and the corruption that is a by-product of Western consumerism have all contributed to a *frightening decline in faith*. This I can state with mathematical certainty: where faith declines, superstition grows.

Temptation must therefore take its place in the categorisation of demonic activity, and I have revised the graded list accordingly: (1) temptation, (2) infestation, (3) oppression, (4) obsession and (5) diabolic/demonic possession.

In light of Myers' continuum as a model, temptation could be seen as the thin end of the wedge. As individuals with the power of volition (free will), each person has the choice of permitting themselves to be tempted into dangerous practices or not. However, unless an individual approaches their life according to strict moral teachings or religious dogma, (such as Judaism, Catholicism or Islam) it is unlikely that they would attribute any

form of pain or suffering resulting from foolish behaviour to the devil. This is the danger that Father Amorth speaks of.

Moving along the continuum, *infestation* is the presence of demonic activity in a location or object, such as a haunted house. Phenomena can include unexplained sounds such as footsteps and other mysterious noises, loud bangs, laughter, screams, dropping temperature, objects disappearing suddenly and reappearing mysteriously in another part of the house. Strange "presences" can be felt, and can include offensive odours, interruption or malfunction of electronic devices, pictures that mysteriously bang or fall off walls, doors and windows that open and close on their own, dishes or other objects levitating and flying about the room. According to Baglio the general agreement of exorcists is that infestation is often caused by a curse, and the solution is usually for an exorcist to say prayers and to celebrate the Mass on the site.

According to psychiatrist Hans Naegeli-Osjord an *infestation* may cause the victim to sometimes suffer physical torture, but more often there are physical disturbances in the environment. These physical manifestations are often ascribed to poltergeist activity, but whereas poltergeist activity usually lasts only for a short period, for the person experiencing infestation, it may last for several years.

Oppression, or psychic attack, can include mysterious blows to the body and strange signs or letters appearing on the body. Baglio suggests that these afflictions are generally aimed at people closest to God. Examples include Saint Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380), Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Saint Gemma Galgani (1878-1903).

As in the Book of Job (1-42), victims of this kind of attack may also suffer in their work, health, or relationships. The purpose of the demonic is supposedly to drive these people towards isolation and despair so they may turn their back on God. Extreme examples of oppression or psychic attack include cases of stigmata which is a phenomenon that Myers took the time to investigate. He gives examples of stigmata and, through experimental hypnosis, offers a scientific explanation for this phenomenon.

Obsession, according to Baglio, involves an intense and persistent attack on the *mind* of the victim. These attacks can include random or obsessive thoughts that are often quite absurd. Thoughts can be so intense that the victim may be unable to free himself from them, or much more dangerously, that he may actually believe them to be true. For example, he

may be led to believe that loved ones who seek to comfort him and relieve him of his symptoms, are conspiring against him. Paranoia can be the result of demonic obsession. Italian exorcist Father Franscensco Bamonte notes:

> Some are thoughts and impulses that urge people to harm others; some make people think that a pact with Satan can get them out of their troubles or bring them success; some are thoughts to profane the Eucharist, others are thoughts to drive one to suicide.

The use of the term *obsession* has been adopted by psychiatry in the diagnosis of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). It has its origins, according to Naegeli-Osjord, in ideas described by Swedenborg as "imprisoned by false ideas". This degree of possession is also named "harassment" by Naegeli-Osjord, who asserts:

> Harassment differs fundamentally from possession. Spirits of all kinds, but most probably "poor souls", and less frequently angel demons of cosmic-archetypal origin appear to be involved. *Elementals*, for example spirits developed from ethereally condensed images and emotional content may also occasionally take part. None of these beings is capable of conquering the body of the victim, but they harass it at a distance, although nothing is measurable within the dimensions of transcendence.

Naegeli-Osjord is of the opinion that the ego of the harassed person may provide a strong enough defence to resist the onslaught of full possession from these lesser spirit forms. On harassment he writes:

> The harassed person does not inflict injuries on himself. He believes that he hears voices in his environment, perceives odours and suffers irritating and sometimes painful touches on the surface of his body. Inexplicable changes in his environment, special displacements of household objects (telekinesis) cause him to firmly believe in spirits which are external to his psychosomatic reality. The situation here resembles what shall later be described as "infestation".

Naegeli-Osjord suggests that the incidence of harassment is far greater than possession, but he suggests that in the past 150 years the incidence of both have decreased considerably, probably due to the ego strengthening of individuals and increased intellectualisation in Western nations. Although increased intellectual capacity and stronger egos may provide increased

protection from spirit influences, Naegeli-Osjord suggests that those with weak egos or other forms of psychological or emotional predisposition are still vulnerable.

My own personal experience of the persistent impression on my mind of the name "James" and its accompanied compulsion that I described in my preface to the first edition of this book would come under the category of harassment or obsession, but from a benign source rather than from a malignant one. It is on reflection and our own introspection that we may begin to acknowledge the possibility of influences from a spirit-world when we question what may be construed as our own irrational ideas when we pose the question, "Where did that idea come from?" Such ideas can be very subtle or severe and highly disruptive as Naegeli-Osjord points out.

At the extreme end of the scale, *diabolic* (or *demonic*) possession has been diagnosed by the Roman Catholic Church according to specific criteria at different times in its history. Demonic possession was originally a catch-all term that was used in pre-modern times to describe all sorts of both physiological and psychological afflictions, the causes of which were not self-evidently organic, and afflictions that failed to respond to standard naturalist medical cures. Somatic symptoms that signalled possible demonic possession have included unusual marks on the skin, bloating and levitation, swelling of the body and limbs and acute pains.

According to the exorcist Malachi Martin, as far back as the life of Jesus himself a peculiar revulsion to symbols and truths of religion is always and without exception a mark of the possessed person. Martin uses the word *possessed* only in one context – that of *diabolic* possession. There are other supernormal phenomena according to Martin that are attributable to diabolic/demonic possession. These can include, but not always, an inexplicable stench, freezing temperature, telepathic powers about religious or moral matters, a peculiarly unlined or completely smooth or stretched skin, an unusual distortion of the face or other physical and behavioural transformations, *possessed gravity* - when the possessed person becomes immovable, *levitation* - when the possessed floats in the air, violent smashing of furniture, constant opening and closing of doors and tearing of fabric with no discernible causes. All of these manifestations are in conflict with our understanding of the known laws of physics, and always elicit incredulity when they are witnessed.

Naegeli-Osjord, one of the first modern psychiatrists to report cases of possession encountered in contemporary clinical practice includes other supernormal phenomena that defy the known laws of physics and human biological functioning:

> Paranormal events include poltergeist phenomena of all kinds. In addition there are smells of putrefaction and the stench of sulphur. In drastic cases, we encounter the occurrence of manifestations from the body. Feathers, iron fragments, smelly fluids emerge from the surfaces of the body or are vomited. The attack can occur spontaneously, it can be announced, or it can be provoked by priests or exorcists.

Baglio reports that diabolic possession is by far the most spectacular and the rarest. In a diabolic possession the devil takes temporary control of a person's body, speaking and acting through it without the person's knowledge or will. The control does not last indefinitely but only during moments of crisis when the victim enters a trance-like state. After the crisis passes, the victim will rarely remember what has transpired. At times when the possessing demon is not in control, it may be possible for the victim to go about his business as if nothing is wrong. However, they can still be affected with obsessive thoughts of persecution, anxiety, depression, hatred or thoughts of suicide.

During moments of crisis the devil may manifest in a variety of ways; including bodily contortions that defy rational explanation, unnatural strength, knowledge of hidden things, or speaking foreign languages. In some cases the devil may speak through the victim in an odd or unnatural voice that is full of hate or rage. Paranormal phenomena may include the appearance of misshapen bugs (with antennae or wings missing for example).

Baglio points out that it is important to note that in the case of demonic possession the soul of the victim is not possessed, just the body. According to the Catholic Church even a person who is in a state of grace could also be possessed as the lives of the saints bear testimony. This raises the question as to what exactly happens to the soul whilst the body is possessed and where does it go?

The exception to the soul remaining in a state of grace is when a person invites the possession and relinquishes their soul to the devil. In that case

the person becomes permanently possessed, “and is like a demon walking on the earth”.

Having introduced a typology of possession that may be accommodated on a continuum, it now remains to determine how to differentiate between the subtle signs of possession at the lower end of the scale and symptoms of mental illness.

Discernment and Alternative Diagnoses

According to Sicilian exorcist Father Matteo La Grua, the discernment of spirits is far more than just an educated guess, and is not to be confused with intuition. Instead:

> Discernment is one of the gifts that God gives to the faithful. It is like a “holy light” that comes from God and that allows those who receive it to see how God is present in all things.

The Bible lists discernment as one of the nine spiritual manifestations of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians, 12: 8-10).

The practice of discerning spirits has a long history in the Christian tradition. For mystics such as Saint Ignatius of Loyola it was a way to understand the impulses of the soul, which, he claimed, were influenced by either good angels, who desired the soul to be filled with faith, hope, love and joy, or by demons who strive to impede our spiritual advancement with temptations of sin and desperation. And while it may sound simple, it is not, because in their cunning demons often disguise their attacks, sometimes even appearing as angels of light. The best way to differentiate between them, says Saint Ignatius, is to look at the end result of the action. If the message will lead to selfishness, hatred, violence and such then its origin is Satan and should be resisted; however, if the end result is for good then the source is God.

The *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 gives three signs that indicate the possible presence of a demon: (a) abnormal strength, (b) the ability to speak and understand a previously unknown language, and (c) the knowledge of hidden things. These signs can offer some indication of demonic possession, but since they are not necessarily caused by the devil, attention should be paid to other factors, especially in the realm of the moral and the

spiritual. Knowledge of hidden things is particularly troublesome, because spiritualists and others with a gift for clairvoyance will have these abilities. Myers' experiments with spiritualist mediums were probably the most significant factor that led him to conclude that possession (in the positive context) is a reality. The most common sign of the presence of the demonic, according to Catholic doctrine, is aversion to the sacred or an inability to pray or speak the name of Jesus or Mary, to go to mass or take communion.

In the experience of seasoned exorcists there is a negative correlation between people who seek an exorcism and those who actually need it. According to Father Carmine De Filippis, a Capuchin exorcist in modern Rome; "generally these people [who think they are possessed] are a little unbalanced, or maybe scared by some books or a movie". Conversely numerous mental illnesses can be mistaken for possession, and it is for this reason that exorcists should insist on a full psychiatric assessment before proceeding. Typically, an exorcist will have a team of professionals, including a psychiatrist, a psychologist and possibly a neurologist, whom he trusts to help with discernment. Not just any psychiatrist will do, and collaboration is only possible when the medical or psychiatric expert is open to the possibility of possession or obsession. It is of additional benefit if the psychiatrist is a Catholic or at the very least a Christian. The reason for this is because, if a psychiatrist is not a Christian, then there is a high probability that he/she is more likely to dismiss the possibility of possession when it could be a correct diagnosis.

Dr Richard Gallagher, an academic psychiatrist in the New York diocese says that the role of the psychiatrist is to make sure that these phenomena do not have a natural explanation before jumping to the preternatural or supernatural one. There are many individuals that may become psychotic for one reason or another, and they may have delusions, hallucinations and they may think that God, the devil, a spirit or aliens are communicating with them and they really believe it. Gallagher claims that instances of demonic possession are more straightforward than cases of mental illness. For example, a person who has a severe personality disorder, and who thinks there is evil inside him, will not have his voice completely change or experience amnesia after an attack. According to Gallagher:

> It is indicative of the full possession syndrome that the individual affected never remembers what the demon says whilst it is speaking during an exorcism.

If it is a case of an overactive imagination, according to Gallagher, an experienced psychiatrist should be able to tell the difference. Only in extremely rare instances, say exorcists, is a person suffering from some form of demonic attack. Some exorcists have never seen a full demonic possession, whilst others encounter the phenomena with some frequency.

M. Scott Peck's case of "Jersey" presents an example of how a psychiatrist can diagnose a condition of mental illness and then, through subtle signs, arrive at the alternative diagnosis of possession. Peck's account is used here as an example of how psychiatry and the church can cooperate, and how they can both get it wrong. The salient points of this case are summarised below:

After a four-hour interview with Jersey, Peck initially diagnosed her with borderline personality disorder, partly due to her switching between the 26-year-old mother of two that was the personality that she presented to the world, and a younger, flirtatious, naive and over-dramatic alter personality. Peck was about to end the interview and report that Jersey was a case for regular psychiatric treatment when she commented that she felt sorry for the demons within her. Peck writes:

> The reason this stopped me dead in my tracks was that it did not fit with standard psychopathology. It seemed to me that if a young woman – particularly a somewhat hysterical one – had a need to invent demons, she would create great, strong, hairy demons, not weak and pathetic ones.
>
> "Could I talk to your demons?" I asked.
>
> "Oh no," Jersey responded. "They would be much too afraid to do that."
>
> I was already in utterly uncharted waters, so why not keep rowing ahead? "Perhaps they would talk to me under hypnosis," I said, "How would you feel about being hypnotised Jersey?"
>
> "That would be kind of fun," Jersey replied in her childlike manner, more like that of a twelve year old than a twenty six year old mother of two.

Under hypnosis, Jersey reported that there were many demons, but only two were willing to talk to Dr Peck. They were female, weak and afraid, and reported that they did things to hurt Jersey, but did so under threat from their "employer", who would hurt them if they did not. They asked Dr Peck to help them. Peck had no idea how to proceed, so he referred to his mentor,

Malachi Martin, the exorcist and author of *Hostage to the Devil* for help. This is where Peck takes a direction that is significantly different from those taken by other psychiatrists who found themselves in similar situations such as Naegeli-Osjord, Baldwin, Fiore, Crabtree and Hickman. Peck educated himself in the use of religious exorcism rather than the less "drastic" techniques discovered by the pioneers of SRT referenced immediately above.

Peck was confronted by supposed demons that were afraid and who explicitly asked for his help. Instead of learning how to help them, he followed Martin's advice and learned how to expel them using deliverance methods and the harsher *Rituale Romanum* of Roman Catholicism, which instructs the exorcist to avoid any dialogue with the possessing spirits, but concentrates on their expulsion without negotiation.

Peck asked a psychologist to test Jersey for mental illness, and no signs of abnormality were found. Peck then sought approval from the Church to put together a team for an exorcism, and after attending to the legal formalities of informed consent from the patient and her family, he proceeded with his team to conduct the exorcism. On the exorcism and his patient's involvement, Peck writes:

> I was impressed by the sheer power of the ancient rite of exorcism yet simultaneously aware that its power entirely depended upon Jersey's will. Three nights before we had gone through the same lengthy ritual but then it was an empty gesture, as Jersey had psychologically isolated herself and her demons from the words and their potential power. This night could not have been more different. Although we made it clear that she had no responsibility in the rite, since she had already chosen against Satan and his minions, thereby expelling them, this time Jersey was obviously alert, peaceful and fully present. Her state endured during her baptism and the communion that followed it, when she did play an active role. She clearly, vocally renounced Satan and all his works during her baptism and she received the communion host with grace.

In conclusion of the case of Jersey, Peck comments:

> To this day I remain intrigued by the fact that Jersey continued to be bothered by voices for at least six years after the exorcism. In fact, I imagine she still hears them. Still, Dr Lieberman [Jersey's own psychiatrist] felt she was healthy and she behaved as if she were healthy. Once someone who abandoned her infant children, she became, as far as I could

> discern, the very best of mothers. Once a completely muddled thinker, she became a person who could think with penetrating clarity, who routinely submitted herself to the demands of scientific objectivity.

What I dispute about Peck's procedure with Jersey is his focus on expelling "Satan" as the cause of her distress and ignoring the lesser voices that remained with her. It is a common experience in SRT practice that lesser entities and even earthbound souls of the deceased can be manipulated by fear of punishment by a *master* or an *employer* to inflict harm on the host. It would appear from Peck's account that the employer of the lesser demons had been expelled by the use of the *Rituale Romanum*, but those lesser entities were not cast out, or dealt with in a more appropriate way. Alternative procedures for dealing with more powerful demonic entities such as masters or employers, and lesser entities who could also be the earthbound souls of the deceased are taught to SRT practitioners as alternatives to the use of the *Rite*.

In matters of discernment, for seasoned psychiatrists like Peck who have extensive experience in dealing with the mentally ill, any unusual quirk that does not quite fit in with the known and expected symptoms can be a clue, such as a crafty sneer or a fleeting look of hatred when religion is mentioned, or a silent giggle or smirk when the therapist is made to feel uncomfortable. On the subtleties of clues, Peck writes:

> People are remarkably different. There is no type of person who is immune to possession. Consequently, possession can be uncovered in people of every personality type and psychiatric diagnosis. The only commonality among them is that their behaviour has differed in a few subtle ways from the traditional diagnoses – ways that cannot quite be explained by the science of psychiatry.

Peck's case of Jersey highlights how easy it is to misdiagnose and consequently mistreat a patient. Moving to the other end of the continuum and treating her as a case of diabolic/demonic possession was a mistake, because this procedure fails to take into account the possible presence of earthbound spirits, who need just as much help as the host.

This case demonstrates the difficulty of discernment when a decision is made that is "either/or". I would want to ascertain whether there is anything else that needs investigating with *all* supposed cases of dissociative or

personality disorder. Peck used the correct method with hypnosis, but he did not follow it through by establishing a working dialogue with the entities he encountered, which could have received benefit by being released from their attachment to Jersey by means of a more appropriate procedure than exorcism.

Cases such as Jersey's are challenging to psychiatry in the diagnosis and discernment process at one end of the continuum, where the clues are subtle and can be missed or misread. But at the other extremity of the continuum are those cases that challenge our known laws of physics and biology, and it is to these cases that I shall now turn, in order to highlight their extraordinary phenomenology.

Three Cases of Diabolic Possession

In the literature on possession, the terms *devil* or *demon* are frequently mentioned. These terms denote nonhuman spirits with evil intent, usually fallen angels of God in the Christian religious idiom. When the expression *the Devil* is used, one of the leaders of the fallen angels is usually meant, often given the names Satan, Beelzebub or Lucifer. Lesser nonhuman spirits are normally not named and are simply referred to as devils or demons; the latter has now come to signify "evil spirits" in general and can include the spirits of "wicked discarnate human beings" that often do reveal their names when exposed.

The Illfurt Boys 1869

In the 1860s a case of diabolic/demonic possession occurred at Illfurt in Alsace, France that illustrates well some of the characteristic behavioural phenomena alluded to earlier. A detailed account of this case is given in *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*:

> Joseph Burner, a Catholic, had two sons: Thiebaut, born in 1855, and Joseph, born in 1857. They were quiet boys of average ability until 25th September 1865 when they began to behave very 'strangely'. Sometimes, whilst lying down, they would spin around with amazing speed. Sometimes they would be seized by convulsions which produced extraordinary contortions in every limb. At other times they became totally rigid, lying motionless for hours, the joints immovable. Often these attacks would end with violent fits of vomiting.

Their hearing was sometimes affected, leaving them for whole periods deaf to the loudest sound. But their speech more than anything displayed great abnormalities: at times they could not speak at all, at other times they shouted continually in the voices of rough men, not schoolchildren. They would curse, swear and blaspheme for hours, terrifying the neighbours.

The Illfurt Boys eventually displayed many of the classical behavioural signs of diabolic/demonic possession as recognised by the Catholic church, including paranormal knowledge (for example, describing in detail events happening at a distance) and fluency in other languages, in this case, English and Latin along with various dialects in Spanish and Italian although they had never even briefly been exposed to the latter. Another symptom considered to be a sure sign of the devil's presence was the boys' violent reaction to seeing holy objects such as holy water, medals, rosaries or relics of the saints. The Blessed Sacrament was an object of particular horror and any pictures of the Virgin Mary, or even the mention of her name, would send them into a frenzy.

The boys were exorcised separately. The elder, Thiebaut, was first and he had to be forced to enter the chapel where the exorcism was to take place. Three strong men were needed to hold him during the whole ceremony as he stood before the tabernacle, eyes closed, face beet-red, lips swollen, drooling a continuous stream of thick yellow froth. The first day of ritual and prayer met with no success.

On the second day Thiebaut was strapped into a straightjacket and seated in an armchair. As the rites began, the boy roared in a deep bass voice and struggled against his bonds. Later when the priest called upon the Blessed Virgin, a horrible scream of agony came from Thiebaut's lips, his body gave a sharp convulsion and he fell forward in a deep sleep. He returned to consciousness an hour later with no memory of the previous two days. Although he was dazed he was completely himself again and the exorcism had succeeded.

In the meantime, Joseph's condition had been deteriorating. He remained separated from his brother as preparations were made for his exorcism to be performed by the parish priest, Father Charles Brey. The ritual began on October 27th, immediately after the celebration of Mass. In this case, it took only three hours to obtain the boy's release. After struggling and screaming frantically, he gave out a loud roar and collapsed.

In a moment, he awoke and was amazed to find himself in a church surrounded by strangers. Like his older brother, he had no memory of the exorcism.

The Illfurt Boys' case demonstrates many of the *behavioural* aspects that are often characteristic of demonic possession. In contrast, the case of Anna Ecklund in 1928 in the United States, which I will now describe, can be seen to be characterised by some of the *physical* phenomena that defy the known laws of physics.

Anna Ecklund 1928

The case of Anna Ecklund, reported by an eye witness and assistant to the exorcist, the Reverend Carl Vogel, features some of the most sensational physical phenomena recorded in the literature on diabolic possession. I cite this case in order to reinforce the argument that such cases tend to be dismissed as beyond the bounds of belief and credulity because they are in contradiction to known physical laws. Myers asserted that our understanding of the laws of physics is incomplete, and the case of Anna Ecklund reinforces that view.

Anna was born in 1882 in the Midwestern United States and raised as a Catholic. She is reported to have been very pious, but at the age of fourteen began to find it difficult to enter into a church. She felt that she was being prevented by some invisible force. She also began to be plagued by disturbing thoughts about committing unspeakable sexual acts, and the shame of this led her to despair. She began to have impulses to attack holy objects, which indicated intermittent but partial possession.

Anna experienced full possession in 1908 when she reached the age of eighteen, but because of scepticism by the church authorities, on the basis that they attributed her condition to mental illness, her exorcism was not performed until 1912 when Father Theophilus Riesinger, a Capuchin monk, was appointed the task. This first exorcism was temporarily successful but she became possessed again for many more years. In 1928 Father Theophilus made another attempt that finally ended Anna's suffering.

The second attempt at Anna's exorcism took place in a Franciscan convent and lasted a total of twenty three days during which several nuns had to be transferred to another convent because of their traumatic experiences during the exorcism. In addition, their pastor, Father Joseph Steiger, became exhausted after having experienced nocturnal disturbances

in his room, a mysterious car accident and his parishioners being disturbed. In describing the initial events of the exorcism at the convent, Reverend Vogel writes:

> Hardly had Father begun the formula for exorcism in the name of the Blessed Trinity, when a terrible scene followed. With lightning speed the possessed dislodged herself from her bed and the hands of the protectors, her body, carried through the air, landed high above the door of the room and clung to the wall with catlike grips. All present were struck with a trembling fear. Father alone kept his peace. "Pull her down, she must be brought back to her place on her bed!" Real force had to be applied to her feet to bring her down from the high position on the wall. The mystery was that she could have clung to the wall at all!

Among the phenomena witnessed by Vogel were a variety of voices coming from her body and not from her mouth, inexplicable increased body weight and impossible contortions of her body. Vogel describes the voices:

> Let it be noted that Satan in his speeches and answers did not use the tongue of the poor possessed girl to make himself understood. The helpless creature had been unconscious for the greater period of the trial, her mouth was closed tight. Even when it was open there was not the slightest sign that the lips moved or that there were any changes in the position of the mouth. It was possible for these evil spirits to speak in an audible manner from somewhere within the girl, possibly they used some inner organ of the body.

On the distortions that challenge the known law of physics and biology Vogel writes:

> The woman's face ... became so twisted and distorted that no one would recognise its features. Her whole body became so horribly disfigured that the appearance of her human shape vanished. Her pale, deathlike and emaciated head often extended to the size of an inverted water pitcher, became fiery red like glowing embers. Her eyes would protrude, her lips would swell up actually to the size of hands, and her thin emaciated body would bloat up to such enormous size that at the first occurrence the pastor and the sisters drew back out of fright, thinking that she would be torn to pieces and burst open. At times her abdominal regions and extremities became hard like iron and stone and were pressed into the bedstead so that the iron beams bent to the floor.

Anna vomited large quantities of foul matter even though she ate nothing and drank little. She had an uncanny ability to know when something had been blessed. Before the exorcism started, when she had been eating normally in the convent, she would never touch anything that had been sprinkled with holy water. The nuns could never deceive her with this. The possessing spirits spoke languages that Anna could not possibly have known, in much the same way that was demonstrated in the case of the Illfurt Boys cited above.

Karen Kingston 1974

Our third and final example of diabolic possession characterised by paranormal physical phenomena is the case of Karen Kingston, reported by Robert Pelton that took place in North Carolina in 1974 and is cited by Adam Crabtree:

> The exorcism sessions were studded with startling paranormal occurrences. Karen was twice levitated off the ground for considerable periods of time. The first instance was most remarkable. The third demon, Elizabeth,[10] had been carrying on with her vicious side so that Father Tyson and Reverend Sutter had to sit on Karen and hold her down lest she harm someone in the room, then:
>
> Her face became grotesquely distorted and her eyes flashed with spite. “So, you god-damned imbeciles want to play a game huh? Well, hold on tight ... I’m going to show you a thing or two.” With this outburst, Karen’s body tensed and became rigid. She slowly raised herself up in mid-air. There she stayed, suspended, with Tyson and Sitter still in position, approximately five feet off the floor. Tyson just sat there gasping. He looked rather ridiculous with his long legs dangling. Sutter looked like a captive who had been shot and draped over a horse.

There is no scientific explanation for the paranormal phenomena that are characterised in these three cases, and although some extraordinary events such as levitation and muscular rigidity can be mimicked by theatrical trickery and hypnotic suggestion and remains a source of modern popular entertainment, their mystery remains in cases of possession. The formation of the Society for Psychical Research by Myers and others in 1882 was part of the movement in the late nineteenth century to halt the epidemic of trickery and charlatanism that became associated with spiritualism, and

bring investigations of associated phenomena back into the realm of legitimate scientific enquiry. [11]

The above cases have been selected in order to identify those physical phenomena that challenge our current understanding of the laws of physics - and I emphasis the term our *current* understanding. This suggests that our level of knowledge concerning the physical universe is still incomplete. Further evidence of our current incomplete scientific knowledge with regard to inexplicable physical phenomena is provided by laser physicist Russell Targ who reports his own experience of having a solid aluminium bar bend by about thirty degrees in his hands by an act of conscious will.

There are three possible lines of enquiry that have the potential to address this problem. The first is offered by the *First Law of Thermodynamics* and is concerned with the physical, mechanical transformation of energy in a closed system. The second is that the universe is not confined solely to a physical domain but is linked to, and interactive with, a spiritual universe where the laws of our physical three-dimensional universe are more flexible. The third line of enquiry is offered by the science of quantum theory which I will explore more fully in Chapter Ten, *Myers' and Quantum theory*.

It is my own contention that each of these three lines of enquiry into the physical, the spiritual and the sub-atomic will ultimately lead to a convergence of all three into a unified whole.

It is because this examination is primarily concerned with the theories of Myers that I shall focus on the second line of enquiry – the possibility of a spiritual domain that connects with, and interacts with the known physical space-time continuum. However, I do feel that it is necessary to put Myers theories into a frame of reference where they may contribute to a model of the whole. I can visualise a sandwich with physics and quantum theory as the bread, and Myers' spirit-world as the filling that binds the sandwich together.

The scientific philosophy of Frederic Myers was to not reject any hypothesis without testing it thoroughly – a view endorsed by William James and the observable fact that physical phenomena, described as "paranormal" are manifest during diabolic exorcism implies that there are laws that we are still not familiar with. Myers asserted that all phenomena are manifestations of a natural order and that the terms "paranormal" and "supernatural" have no meaning other than that they are unusual and as yet unexplained.

Exploring Eye-witness Testimony

A rigid acceptance of the laws of physics, as we currently understand them, together with theatrical demonstrations of carefully constructed illusions that appear to defy the known laws of physics, contribute to the notion that all such phenomena are the results of illusions or fraud. Therefore, it is not only necessary, but *essential,* that we rigorously test the validity of eye-witness testimony and explore those psychological mechanisms associated with it.

Myers considered research on hallucinations particularly important, because they provide an instructive means of studying the relationship between subjective, mental, internal perception and objective, physical, external reality. Myers noted that our senses do not provide us with an entirely objective representation of external reality. Sensory perception is in itself a mental construct that, in its own way, is highly symbolic. Likewise, hallucinations further confound our already doubtful contrast between objective and subjective, and between real and unreal things. In other words what we see is dependent on how we perceive it. That is a far-reaching and profound statement to make and demands critical attention. It means that our *perception* determines *what* we see.

I shall now apply Myers' views on hallucinations to the examination of eye-witness testimony of an account of a person diagnosed as possessed by spirits. The psychiatrist, M. Scott Peck was one of a team of seven, including priests, doctors and psychiatrists attending to the possession of his patient "Beccah". This case is particularly pertinent to our discussion as it raises questions regarding (a) the efficacy of eye-witness testimony according to *perception* (b) the possibility of altering physical nature with spiritual power and (c) the concept of *telepathy* between spirits and the living. On Beccah's appearance during the exorcism, Peck writes:

> …while Beccah's head was continuing to hang down listlessly, it had slowly started to move back and forth in a strange weaving pattern that looked remarkably like that of a cobra. We had some brief discussion as to whether this phenomenon might somehow be representative of the snake in the Garden of Eden – of the devil in its earliest recorded appearance.
>
> The single most dramatic part of the day, and the days to come, was the appearance of the monstrous snub-nosed snake with hooded eyes. I use the word 'appearance' because I

> am speaking now strictly as a sceptical, typically materialistic scientist. With the exception of a moment but a few seconds in length, Beccah's satanic appearance was not captured on the videotape – although I might add that with the team constantly having to restrain her it was difficult for the videotape to capture Beccah's face at all. ….. Beccah's snakelike appearance was so commanding that we all perceived it and everyone commented on it. The team's experience of Beccah as a snake was unanimous.

The fact that all seven people in attendance at Beccah's exorcism perceived her as a snake presents three possible hypotheses. Is it possible that all seven witnesses perceived her as a snake according to their own religious beliefs and predetermined ideas about the manifestation of evil as the serpent in the Garden of Eden? In other words, were they simply *projecting* their own thoughts and ideas onto how they perceived the patient? Alternatively did possession by the devil actually affect the physical appearance (trans-configuration) of the patient? Or, as a third alternative, was it possible for the demon (or whatever it was that possessed Beccah) to actually have the extraordinary ability to induce the *illusion* of the serpent into the minds of all seven witnesses at the same time?

If the first hypothesis is correct, then it could be argued that the serpent was a projected manifestation of the perceptions of each individual, or as a collective, the convergent imaginations of all seven witnesses. This line of enquiry would test the reliability of eye-witness testimony, suggesting that people can agree on seeing something that is not objective reality, but is a perceptual or symbolic interpretation that results in a hallucination for each individual that is based on a consensus of belief. The stimulus for the projection could have been Beccah's movements. It was her strange weaving pattern that initiated the idea of a snake and prompted the discussion between the witnesses about the serpent of the *Old Testament*. This is the theory that would stand the highest chance of acceptance by mainstream psychology, and discounts the possibility that the stimulus for the projection (Beccah's appearance) was veridical (originating in another place).

According to Myers, veridical hallucinations are both subjective and objective. Even when the stimulus for the hallucination is external and objective, the percipient's mind often contributes by modifying that original stimulus in idiosyncratic ways, such that the hallucination may take on a symbolic, unexpected or familiar form. This could provide a psychological

explanation as to why all seven eye-witnesses perceived Beccah's appearance as the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

In contrast to researchers such as Pierre Janet, who believed that hypnotic phenomena such as suggested hallucinations could only be produced in hysterical subjects, Myers and Gurney demonstrated that healthy individuals can be hypnotised and induced to experience vivid hallucinations. In addition, they demonstrated the frequent occurrence of spontaneous hallucinations among healthy-minded persons.

To test the hypothesis that comments from one witness can influence the perception of another, Myers conducted some experiments in which two hypnotized subjects were given a different suggestion about what they should see. They were then brought together to describe what they saw. Each subject described what had been suggested to him, and neither of them was able to convince the other of what they saw or to report anything else. Such experiments are pertinent to the question of collective hallucinations, and particularly the hypothesis that the comments or reactions of one person having a hallucination influences others present to have a hallucination that they otherwise would not have had.

Myers' theory still leaves open the possibility that the objective stimulus (Beccah's features and movement) was veridical, and it is this second hypothesis that challenges even further the scientific framework of mainstream psychology.

If the second hypothesis is correct, then the devil (or some other unexplained discarnate intelligence) does have the power to manipulate the physical form of the possessed. In other words; mind can manipulate matter. This is the hypothesis that challenges the laws of physics, and addresses the perennial mind-body problem. Modern researchers who are investigating psychokinetics (PK) are testing the hypothesis that mind can influence matter, and experiments in PK show that under certain circumstances the hypothesis is supported.

Scientific evidence points to the conclusion that consciousness can influence or manipulate the body in a variety of different ways. But we are still left with the question: "Whose mind is doing the manipulating?" And: "Do they really have the power to manipulate the physical form of a person?" The answer to the first must remain a mystery for the time being, leaving us to look for an explanation as to how a person's mind can affect another person's body.

Frederic Myers suggested that all "supernormal" phenomena, including those in which the thoughts of one person seem to have affected the body of another person, may reflect an ability to act on other bodies "such as the living energy, whatever it be, in each of us is wont to exercise upon the brain". By naming a mysterious process as "telergy" [12], the extension of one person's volition to another person's body would seem radical, but Myers concluded by saying that we are just as ignorant about the nature of *volition* as we are about how it affects the body:

> It is the very secret of life that confronts us here; the fundamental antinomy between mind and matter ... I here say only that since this problem does already exist,... we have no right to take for granted that the problem, when more closely approached, will keep within its ancient limits, or the mind, whose far darting energy we are now realising, must needs be always powerless upon aught but the grey matter of the brain.

The phenomena created by self-suggestion in the waking state of the students of Dr Wingfield at Cambridge demonstrate the power of suggestion in affecting changes in the body. Myers remarked on these experiments by saying:

> The trivial character of these laboratory experiments makes them physiologically the more remarkable. There is the very minimum of predisposing conditions, of excited expectation, or of external motive prompting to extraordinary effort. And the results are not subjective merely – relief of pain and so on – but are definite neuromuscular changes, capable of unmistakable test.

Myers proposed that there is a part of the subliminal self that has complete mastery and control over all functions and aspects of the body. When the legitimate possessing entity (the Subliminal Self) has been scared away or is absent from its rightful place as controller of the body, so that the body may become possessed by a malevolent entity, then that entity has the power to manipulate the body in the absence of the legitimate soul or spirit. It could therefore be assumed that in the absence of any suggestion from any person present, or in the absence of any act of will from the legitimate host, should the body become deformed or changed in any way, then those changes could be caused by a possessing entity.

If the third hypothesis is correct then an unidentified mind has the ability to plant thoughts and ideas in several people all at the same time. This hypothesis is dependent on the theory that a discarnate intellect is at work, and is based on the theory of *telepathy* (that is mind-to-mind communication). It is in this area that the work of Myers was concentrated in his early years of research, and it is the concept of telepathic communication that is of particular interest with regard to possession and SRT as a form of intervention.

Hallucinations raise an acute form of the problem between subjectivity and objectivity. The instances that Myers believed to be the most important to study, are collective cases, where more than one person perceives an apparition simultaneously, because collective cases suggest some kind of objective stimulus for the hallucination. For Myers, these cases raised "the perplexing problem of the relation of psychical operations to space".

To investigate this problem, Myers, Gurney and Podmore examined cases that they published in *Phantasms of the Living* in 1886 where an image (phantom) of a living person was seen by other persons at a distance from the originator of the image.

Evidence from cases cited in *Phantasms of the Living* can provide support for the hypothesis that Peck and his fellow eye-witnesses perceived a phantasm that was suggested to their individual subliminal selves by a discarnate spirit that enabled them to perceive the features and behaviour of Beccah as snakelike.

Myers fully believed that there are laws of mental causality, or psychological laws, in addition to those of the physical world, but not derived from them. Moreover, he believed that some concepts such as telepathy – the hypothesis that individual minds can, at some subliminal level, interact with other minds, will be important elements in the major laws or principles of psychology that still remain to be discovered. Myers thought that these undiscovered laws would demonstrate what he called "the Interpenetration of Worlds". The belief that there is a world beyond the known physical one has been fundamental to most religions, but in Western minds these two worlds have been seen as separate and discontinuous. Myers believed that the demonstration of telepathy would provide a scientific basis for belief in the other world and that there is interaction between them.

Of the three hypotheses presented above, the first is acceptable to psychology, the second is rejected completely on the basis that there is no scientific theory to support it, and the third is rejected by mainstream psychology on the grounds that telepathy is not a concept that can be accommodated by the physical sciences, and a spirit world does not exist. However, according to the theories and research findings of Myers, not only is a spirit realm a possibility, but strong evidence supports its existence as a non-material realm that interacts with the material world.

There is of course a fourth hypothesis that rests purely on the scientific framework of the physical sciences and the theory that all human thoughts and perceptions are the products of the physical brain: that all seven witnesses were experiencing pathological hallucinations and that they were all delusional.

This hypothesis would suggest that Peck's diagnosis of possession was no more than a projection of his own delusions and all other six assistants at Beccah's exorcism were accomplices and equally delusional.

Chapter Four

Measuring Beliefs in Possession

The world over, and throughout history, people have held the belief that human beings can be possessed, taken over, shared or influenced in some way by an alien spirit, god, devil, deity or ancestral spirit.

It is believed in many cultures that the presence of an evil spirit can be indicated by a variety of manifestations such as serious disabilities, miscarriages, addictions to drugs or alcohol, excessive lust, violence or even lack of religious faith. In some communities the failure of crops, unexplained deaths, infertility in animals or people may indicate an evil presence at work. In parts of Africa, there are Pentecostal Christians who believe that demons can endow humans with the power to cause harm to others by witchcraft. Diviners are then called upon to expose the witch, who is then subjected to ritual exorcism.

Psychometric Testing of Beliefs in Psychic Ability

One social survey in the United States suggested that 50% of Americans believed in psychic and paranormal phenomena and that this belief was on the increase. A breakdown of the percentages of those who believe in specific phenomena is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4-1 Beliefs in paranormal phenomena (1)

Phenomenon	Per cent
Psychic or spiritual healing	54
Extrasensory perception (ESP)	50
Haunted houses	42
Ghosts	38
Telepathy	36
Visits to Earth by extra terrestrials	33
Clairvoyance	32
Astrology	28
Spirit communications	28
Witchcraft	26
Reincarnation	25
Spirit possession	15

It can be seen from the above table that beliefs in spirit possession are held by 15% of the surveyed population. Similar beliefs are held in Great Britain, Northern Europe and other parts of the world and an independent poll commissioned by the Institute for Research in Social Science in 1998 identified endorsement of beliefs in a selection of paranormal beliefs, as illustrated in the next table.

Table 4-2 Beliefs in the paranormal (2)

Phenomenon	Per cent
God answers prayers	86
God	84
Life after death	73
Heaven or hell	68
Biblical account of creation	62
ESP	60
Diabolic possession	55
Psychic or spiritual healing	55

Ghosts	41
UFOs	39
ET visits to Earth	34
Astrology	33
Being at least somewhere superstitious	25
Reincarnation	25

In the above table, beliefs in diabolic possession are held by 55% of the sample population. I would suggest that this is a higher percentage than might be expected, and could be a result of those factors previously examined in Chapter One when I examined Michael Cuneo's work on the impact of Blatty's book and film *The Exorcist*.

Research into such beliefs is predominantly conducted by sceptics who attest that such beliefs have no scientific evidence to support them. According to Richard Wiseman and Caroline Watt there are three theories used in parapsychology research in attempts to explain the psychological mechanisms underlying the formulation of such beliefs: The *motivational* perspective examines whether such beliefs are developed in part because they fulfil the need for control or form an integral part of a religious or philosophical world-view. The second theory argues that psychic abilities *actually exist* and that these beliefs are formed from the subjective experience of genuine psychic phenomena. The third theory is that people who believe in psychic phenomena have psychological attributes that make them more likely to *misattribute* paranormal causation to normal experiences. This is what Wiseman and Watt call the "misattribution theory", and their paper presents a qualitative and critical review of the research relating to this third theory.

Wiseman and Watt provide a useful categorisation of psychic ability that is divided into two main types: extra-sensory perception and psychokinetics. Extra-sensory perception (ESP) is the apparent ability to receive information through a communication channel that mainstream science is not yet able to recognise. This category includes *mediumistic clairvoyance* where the information is unknown to anyone else, *telepathy* where the information is transmitted from another person, and *precognition* where future events are predicted. Psychokinetics (PK) is the apparent ability to influence physical objects or biological systems using means that are still inexplicable to mainstream science. This may also include the

ability to cause levitation; influence random event generators (REGs) and forms of spiritual healing that are considered to be "paranormal". It is in this area that the dramatic physical phenomena witnessed in those cases of diabolic possession cause the greatest challenge to the physical sciences, and I shall return to this problem later in this book in Chapter Ten. In the meantime I shall enable Wiseman and Watt to show how belief systems in psychic ability are structured and measured by contemporary psychology, and then I shall examine how their analysis compares with the theoretical frameworks of Myers.

Wiseman and Watt found that several psychology researchers have developed a range of psychometric instruments to measure belief in psychic abilities. These instruments include the Sheep-Goat Scale (SGS) which was first developed by Gertrude Schmeidler in 1945, (further developed into the Australian version (ASGS) by Michael Thalbourne) and the Paranormal Belief Scale (PBS) by Goulding and Parker in 2001.

All of these instruments are built using modern theories on the development of self-report psychometric testing. The ASGS is built with sixteen items on a visual analogue scale, and the PBS is comprised of twenty six items on a 7-part Likert scale that is anchored by strongly-agree and strongly-disagree. These scales include questions of belief relative to such phenomena as life after death, spiritualism, UFOs, superstition, precognition, astrology, luck, spirit possession and various other PK and ESP phenomena. Wiseman and Watt, in their paper, have focussed on just one of the factors from all of these instruments – that of *belief in psychic ability* - and treat it as a single dimension. They evaluate the "misattribution" hypothesis by examination of four processes that may lead to misattribution. These processes are; (a) poor general cognitive abilities, (b) probability misjudgements, (c) propensity to find correspondence in distantly related material and (d) fantasy proneness. Their analysis of the literature from a range of studies that examined (a) *poor general cognitive abilities* arrived at the conclusion that there is no support for the hypothesis that disbelievers and believers differ in their general cognitive functioning.

Analysis of the literature testing beliefs in psychic ability and (b) *misjudgement probability* does provide some evidence but still failed to support the hypothesis.

On the literature on research to test for beliefs in psychic ability and (c) *the propensity to find correspondence in distantly related material*,

Wiseman and Watt found that research conducted by Brugger and Taylor in 2003 argued that high scores on tasks involving perceived connections in distantly related material are the result of the type of dis-inhibition that may act as one basis for schizophrenic thought disorder. Wiseman and Watt point out that other researchers have stressed that this should not be used to pathologize belief in the paranormal, but instead should help clarify the distinction between healthy forms of such beliefs and those forms that could be associated with psychological ill-health. These conclusions strongly suggest that there is a link, or the possibility of confusion between psychic ability and mental health which inevitably directs attention to be focused in that area. Both Frederic Myers and William James disagreed with Pierre Janet on this very point on the subject of "automatisms". Janet asserted that dissociation and automatisms were pathological whereas James and Myers argued that each case should be evaluated on its own merits due to the observable fact that healthy minded individuals also experienced dissociation and automatisms.

The fourth process, (d) *fantasy proneness,* entails a propensity to fantasise to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish the difference between what is imagined and what is caused by an external source. The fantasy proneness hypothesis predicts that believers in psychic ability will have higher scores than non-believers on those measures that relate to fantasy proneness, which include for example, hypnotisability, suggestibility, imagery skills, absorptions and dissociation.

Wiseman and Watt found a considerable literature on research into the relationship between beliefs in psychic ability and fantasy proneness that have several factors that are consistent and are interconnected, and thus may reflect the operation of a single underlying concept. This suggests the need for caution in accepting these findings. They point to the large body of work by Australian parapsychologist Michael Thalbourne, on the hypothesis that "transliminality" is the single underlying concept that underpins a wide range of factors including; dream interpretation, fantasy proneness, absorption, magical ideation and mystical experience.

"Transliminality" is Thalbourne's own term to describe the ability (or tendency) to enter into an altered state of consciousness.

In their conclusions, Wiseman and Watt suggest that there is a pressing need for future work to try to resolve the inconsistent results in this area of research, by attempting to control the areas of inconsistency. They suggest

that the entire area would greatly benefit from a more reliable and more finely grained measure of belief in psychic ability that includes such factors as reflecting on the degree of conviction with which such beliefs are held, and the evidence on which they are based (e.g. personal experiences, another person's experiences, media influence and religious influence). They express their hope that such work would help to clarify many of the unsolved mysteries currently associated with the formation and maintenance of such beliefs. This recommendation concurs with my own assertion, supported by suggestions resulting from the inadequacies of observation studies in the social sciences and anthropology that *experience* supported by *corroborating evidence* are essential factors to be included in scientific research methodologies.

The use of psychometric testing is a cognitive process method that relies upon focussed attention on the instrument with the conscious awareness. Where psychometric tests give an indication that there could be unconscious or *subliminal* processes at work then it is logical to adopt a method that is able to access the subliminal directly, without the illusions and predispositions of the conscious mind getting in the way and creating obstacles. In short, the illusions of the environmentally conditioned conscious mind need to be bypassed by a more direct and effective method.

The decision of Wiseman and Watt to pursue the third (sceptical) avenue is a strong suggestion (or hope) that it is a potentially more rewarding avenue for scientific research, than to consider the validity of religious or philosophical belief systems or the possibility that paranormal phenomena are genuine. In other words, it is probable that the pursuit of this avenue is motivated by mainstream scientific scepticism where it is important to find an alternative hypothesis to the one that declares that psychic (psi) phenomena are integrated with, and interactive with, the world of matter. There is a theory that those experiments or surveys that are conducted by experimenters who are sceptical are more likely to produce an inconclusive result due to their scepticism, and those who are not sceptical will produce a result that supports the hypothesis. This is known as "experimenter-effect", which I will now explore.

Experimenter Effect

Sceptics and proponents can be identified by the kind of research they do. This is demonstrated by Wiseman and Watt who chose to examine studies

where the hypothesis to be tested is that believers in psychic ability have some kind of psychological misattribution. Given that they are sceptics, they would rather see the hypothesis supported, and where the evidence points in the opposite direction, they recommend more stringent psychometric instruments. Conversely, the "experimenter-effect" theory suggests that when they conduct experiments to test the hypothesis that psychic phenomena are a reality; the probability is that their scepticism will produce a negative result.

To investigate the validity of the experimenter-effect theory, Wiseman, as a self-confessed sceptic, cooperated with Marilyn Schlitz, a proponent of evidence for psychic ability, in two studies where each experimenter tried to influence mentally the electro-dermal activity of participants at a distance. These first two collaborations produced evidence of the experimenter effect; that is, experiments conducted by the proponent produced significant results to support the experimental hypothesis, whereas the experiments conducted by the sceptic did not. A third study conducted by Wiseman and Schlitz, with the collaboration of Caroline Watt and Dean Radin, attempted to replicate the findings of Schlitz and Wiseman but failed. In their concluding discussion and recommendations for further research, Schlitz et al suggest that:

> It is hoped that the studies described here will encourage researchers working in other controversial areas, such as the role of trance in hypnosis, false memory syndrome, unorthodox forms of psychotherapy and complementary medicine, to engage in similar joint projects and that such work will help advance our understanding of the phenomena underlying these controversies.

Once again the findings and recommendations point towards the development of a methodology that not only builds on the inadequacies of the current psychometric methods in use, but also point to a different method, where not only cognitive processes are involved, but also more subtle emotional ones. This is something that psychometric testing on its own is ill-equipped to do. It is my contention that the inconclusive results of psychometric experiments to test hypotheses that refute the existence of psychic phenomena point to the alternative hypothesis that they do exist. Furthermore, sceptics' persistent attempts to design more sensitive

psychometric instruments will ultimately result in confirmation that psychic phenomena are a reality that needs to be acknowledged.

The recurring themes of *experience* and *altered states* emerged from a brief view of social science methods in Chapters One and Two. These themes have recurred in criticism of the methods of hypothesis testing by the use of psychometric measuring instruments alone. Inconclusive results from the use of psychometric methods point in the direction of the influence of *experimenter-effect*.

The hypothesis that psychic phenomena and mental health are negatively correlated seems to be a hypothesis that sceptics are intent on supporting one way or another. However, there are studies that show a positive correlation between psychic ability and mental health, and I shall address this connection in Chapter Thirteen. Research into these areas of belief in psychic abilities continues to raise questions regarding the nature of consciousness itself, and research needs to be pursued in those areas using methods that bypass the contamination of expectation and experimenter intention, as well as contamination by expectation, suggestion and conformity of participants.

What I have discovered from my research into the methods used to investigate beliefs in spirit possession (or psychic phenomena) so far is corroboration of Edward Kelly's statement below:

> The science of the mind has reached a point where multiple lines of empirical evidence, drawn from a wide variety of sources, converge to produce a resolution of the mind-body problem along lines sharply divergent from the current mainstream view.

Myers had faith in science to reveal hidden truths concerning the soul of man, and it would appear that modern scientific methods are pointing in the direction that he anticipated, despite the fact that mainstream modern science still has difficulty accepting their own findings.

What is clear is that the old scientific framework is difficult to dislodge because there are some influential scientists who are determined to remain sceptical in spite of evidence that challenges their world-view. However, where attempts to explain beliefs in psychic abilities as potentially pathological, or to put it more kindly as "misattributed", there is evidence from the experience of being possessed one's self to support the possession

belief hypothesis. It is therefore in the realm of *experience* rather than in misguided beliefs that scientific scrutiny must venture.

Hypothesis testing by experimentation is just one method available to scientific enquiry, and as I asserted in Chapter One where I examined the methods of social science, there is another method, that of case-study quantification that can provide valuable evidence that can be used to identify trends in the occurrence of specific phenomena. This type of evidence is used extensively in the study of infectious diseases and can be used to bypass the influence of beliefs or expectations by simple observation of the data presented.

Case-Study Database Quantification

It is in psychiatric and clinical psychology case histories where the subjective experience of clients (patients) suffering from all the maladies of the mind and emotions may be found and analysed. Edward Kelly, a modern supporter of Myers' pioneering work, suggests how case histories can be used for scientific research:

> Cases initially studied and reported individually can be encoded according to appropriate descriptive schemes and entered into cumulative databases which, when they become sufficiently large, afford important new opportunities for quantitative study of internal patterns, predictive relationships, and so on, governing the relevant domains.

It may be anticipated that a database of case studies, that includes the coded experience of "trance possession" would include cases where possession is reported according to a *belief* in possession, but a successful remedy reveals that the belief was false. Conversely, data could reveal instances where there was *no belief* in possession at all and yet a successful intervention reveals a case of genuine spirit possession. It is these cases that would provide the most valuable information on the *experience* rather than the *belief* if such cases could be reported. This proposition requires a more open-minded approach, and would demand that observers and therapists suspend their own disbelief, and simply allow the patient to explore, discover and report exactly what it is that they are experiencing.

Psychiatrist Shakuntala Modi sets the standard by offering her analysis of patients who had presented a wide variety of emotional, mental, behavioural and physical problems. Analysis of 100 patients revealed

results that were surprising. 92 of the 100 were found to have earthbound spirits attached to them, 80 patients had more than one, 50 patients had spirits of relatives and 77 patients had spirits that were described by Modi as “demonic”. Modi’s analysis also revealed that 80% of primary (acute) symptoms such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks and psychotic symptoms, and 30% of secondary (chronic) symptoms such as arthritis, sinusitis, back pain and headaches are caused by spirits, while 20% of primary symptoms and 70% of secondary symptoms were caused by past-life traumas.

Modi reveals that contrary to her training as a medical psychiatrist and her non-belief in a spirit world, the experiences of her patients and her own experiences that were led by her patients, enabled her to accept the plausibility of an alternate reality and the ontology of spirit entities. I cite Modi’s findings in order to illustrate the point that accurate case records can be used to provide useful descriptive statistics, and whether the patient or the therapist has a belief in an afterlife or not, the data can be left to speak for itself. To further illustrate the point that a belief in an afterlife, or a belief in the ontology of spirit entities is irrelevant, I shall now refer to the work of hypnotherapist Roy Hunter, who has no belief in a spirit world, and dismisses the concept in favour of working with the patient “as-if” what they experience is real.

Client Centred Ego-State Therapy with Hypnosis

Hypnotherapist Roy Hunter is a dedicated exponent of “client-centred parts therapy” which operates on the model that the human psyche is comprised of “parts” that can either work together as an integrated whole, or are in conflict with one another. When confronted with “parts” that claim to be discarnate entities, Hunter has gained clinical experience that enables him to facilitate entity release whilst suspending his own sceptical belief system and responding to what the client discovers from his/her own *subliminal mind*. Hunter is critical of spirit release therapists, who, he claims, go looking for entities. Unfortunately the only SRT practitioner he cites in support of his argument is William Baldwin. Hunter writes:

> William Baldwin considers them [negative parts that claim to be entities] to be entities that must be released through some sort of process that resembles an exorcism. Many religious

> people will immediately agree with Baldwin and assume that such a part would indeed be a demonic or negative entity, as do some hypnotherapists and psychotherapists.

Hunter is unjustly critical of Baldwin because he fails to acknowledge the origin of Baldwin's approach. Below are quotations from Hunter's method of dealing with reported negative entities that may be compared with Baldwin's and other practitioners' techniques. They are essentially the same, as Hunter clearly demonstrates in his method:

> There is a part of you that is most closely connected to God (or higher power). That part has access to wisdom that can provide great benefit right now. It is important for (client's name) that I speak with that part now. If it is permitted, please say the words "I am here" or move the 'yes' finger.

When Hunter receives a positive response to his question he engages the source with an important question: "Do you serve the Light?" Once again, with a positive response, he continues:

> (Client's name) has a part that claims to be (entity name or title). Please tell us how to proceed.
>
> From here I simply ask the higher power or higher-self part to give me step by step instructions on how to deal with the alleged entity. Sometimes it is simply a disowned part that needs a new and productive job, as well as acceptance by the client and his/her other parts. Occasionally Higher Power identifies it as an entity, and asks me to dismiss it. Such dismissal almost always involves asking the client if he/she wishes to release the alleged entity.
>
> Frequently I am instructed to call on the name of Jesus before dismissing the part in his name. Sometimes Higher power tells the client to invite an archangel (Michael or Gabriel) to assist, or some other 'ascended master'. On one occasion a client was instructed to invite both Buddha and Christ. Occasionally, the client asks a higher Power to escort the alleged entity away. Often it is released into the Light, and goes on its own when told to do so or when escorted. Some call it exorcism.

Not only does Hunter's method easily compare with other SRT practitioners, it also has resonance with the method previously discussed in Chapter Two of Mercy Magbagbeola of the Celestial Church of Christ. The difference between Hunter and Magbagbeola is that Hunter has engaged the "Higher-

Self" of the client whilst the client is in trance, whereas Magbagbeola has invited the Holy Spirit into herself, whilst she is in the altered state. Experienced SRT practitioners are aware of the choices they have depending on the ability of the *client* to enter into an altered state, and depending on their *own* ability to enter the altered state and receive information from a higher source.

Hunter is deserving of credit for taking an objective approach to dealing with inner conflicts through applications of ego-state therapy using hypnosis, and dealing with attached spirit entities in a way that suspends modern secular, materialistic beliefs. However, he gives the impression in his book that he is something of a pioneer in the discovery of hidden realms or knowledge with regard to what he calls the "unconscious" and a "Higher Power":

> New frontiers of possibility exist in the undiscovered country of the subconscious, especially regarding our potential connection to a Higher Power. These are the voyages of the inner mind, to seek out new ideas, and to boldly go where few have gone before.
>
> On numerous occasions over the years, I've used an application of parts therapy to access that part of the inner mind that is most closely connected to God, or the client's perception of Higher Power. Frequently the client obtains deeply encouraging insights, along with important information regarding their purpose in life. Whether or not one believes in God or a Higher Power, the subconscious (or unconscious) contains access to an inner wisdom that sometimes far surpasses that of ordinary consciousness.

Merely using these ideas as therapeutic tools, as Hunter purports to do, is appropriate for as long as they are effective in helping the patient resolve issues and function as a healthy member of society. However, the real value of Hunter's work is in demonstrating the simple fact that the beliefs of the therapist are irrelevant. Nonetheless, I will argue that sitting on the fence (which is what Hunter implies in order to maintain his scientific status) is not conclusive; and real healing of the mental, the emotional, the spiritual and the physical is more likely to take place once the truth emerges of a continuing purposeful existence beyond the material. I would further argue that our own (or the patient's) Higher Self, together with those discarnate spirit entities that are intent on causing deliberate harm to the patient, are intelligently aware of the real beliefs (or otherwise) of the therapist.

Contrary to Hunter's own naive discoveries, the conceptual frameworks of Frederic Myers - supported by the practical experiences of SRT practitioners - add credible evidence that the existence of a spirit world is a reality. These findings are in direct contradiction with writers and scientists such as Richard Dawkins and Carl Sagan when they reflect the prevalent world-view that, in spite of the evolutionary advances in our consciousness, when the individual brain dies, that is the end of it.

In researching beliefs in psychical abilities it has emerged that there are three theories that attempt to explain belief systems (a) the need for a sense of control, either through motivation or a religious world-view, (b) psychic abilities and other psi phenomena are genuine, and (c) those who believe in psychic abilities have a predisposition to "misattribution".

Effort is spent by sceptics in focussing on gaining evidence to refute the hypothesis that psychic ability is a reality. However, their task is made doubly difficult because they are trying to prove that something does not exist. Sir Karl Popper pointed out that empirical data, by its very nature, cannot be used to disprove a non-empirical belief. Surely, therefore, greater rewards potentially remain to be found in researching how psychic ability does work, by using a revised empirical method, rather than trying to disprove it by using methods that are rooted in physical principles. This is precisely what Myers did; supported by William James' philosophy of "radical empiricism" that he insisted should be applied directly in the study of all subjective experiences.

PART II:

MYERS' CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In Part I of this book I examined the methods and theories most often used in the fields of social science, psychology and anthropology in their attempts to understand spirit possession, and the subsequent deficiencies in such methods and theories. This enabled us to get a taste of the scale and complexity of the problems encountered with these methods.

The two key factors that have emerged from a critique of these methods are (a) the influence of *experience* on belief systems, and (b) the significance of the *altered state of consciousness*. It is these two factors that I will scrutinise in my examination of the theories and methods of Frederic Myers.

Chapter Five

Myers' Scientific Theories

Unresolved Dilemmas of Nineteenth-Century Psychology

The physical sciences presented the emerging science of psychology in the nineteenth century with a difficult problem. The phenomena of psychology are unlike those of any of the physical sciences in that they are *mental* and not physical. Theoretical psychology raises such questions as: What are mental phenomena, and what is the nature of their relationship with physical phenomena? Is mind an elementary force in nature, as primary and fundamental a characteristic of nature as matter? And what of mental causality or volition? Can mental phenomena initiate changes in the physical world? If so, what are the parameters and laws of such mental causality, and what implications do they raise for the question of whether mind is a fundamental or a derivative aspect of nature? In short – is mind caused or causal?

The physical sciences had no reason to pose such questions, so they developed without recourse to, or acknowledgment of, a spiritual or mental causality. The notion of mental causality (or volition) was increasingly dismissed as a vestige of primitive, supernatural ways of thinking. The conflict facing psychology in the nineteenth century was often portrayed as the conflict between science and religion, but it was in reality a question of scientific framework, that is a conflict between knowledge gained through *experience* and knowledge gained through being taught (or *told*) by others. The dilemma facing psychology was either to narrow psychology and shoe-horn it to fit mechanistic, deterministic science as it was then understood, or to expand the conceptual framework of science to accommodate mental phenomena. Thus Boring asserts:

> Historically science is physical science. Psychology, if it is to be a science, must be like physics. The ultimate abandonment of dualism leaves us the physical world as the only reality. Consciousness will ultimately be measured in physical dimensions.

Myers' research was primarily concerned with the above mentioned conflict between *experience* and taught *knowledge*, and he designed experiments that enabled him to distinguish the difference between what was known by the developing science of psychology and what was yet to be known, and between what was *believed* to exist and what was *proved* to have ontological status through rigorous empirical studies.

Myers' Purposes and Principles

Myers was one of the Society's most active investigators and prolific writers in the first two decades of its existence, and his model of human personality, which he began to formulate in the early 1880s, became the theoretical framework for psychical research, and remained so for decades to come.

Myers fought the prevailing tendency in late nineteenth-century psychology to exclude its most fundamental problems and argued for an expansion of its empirical base, the development of its own methods, and an examination of the theoretical assumptions about mind and matter that were contributing to the narrowing of psychology. The central principles that guided Myers were precisely those of his scientific contemporaries, including ideas of *continuity*, *conservation* and *evolution*. His aim was to encourage the expansion of science and scientific method in order to address the most fundamental questions about the nature of human personality.

Fundamental to Myers' thinking and to psychical research was the belief that conflicts between theories are best settled not by contentious debate, but by increased knowledge, and that knowledge advances not by the clashing of old antagonists but by the application of both new methods and new perspectives to old problems. Behind Myers' work was a conscious and sustained attempt to move beyond the increasingly polarised positions of nineteenth-century thought and to seek broader perspectives in which aspects of both or all sides may have a place. For example, Myers could find no value in the methodological parallelism that allowed psychologists to avoid the important issue of mind-brain correlation. Instead, by adopting a *tertium-quid* approach where it is possible to construct a conceptual model

of mind-body correlation whereby both mind and body would interact with each other in a symbiotic evolutionary relationship. To carry this concept to another level, we may hypothesise that there is a symbiotic evolutionary relationship between spirit and matter – between spirit and man, which would include interactions between non-corporeal entities such as the earthbound spirits of the deceased and the living. For modern science to adopt Myers' *tertium-quid* approach would enable contemporary science to construct a model that can accommodate spirit possession, spirit attachments and the influences of both beneficial and malign intent.

For Myers the continuity of nature was one of the most fundamental principles guiding scientific knowledge. Myers believed that *all* phenomena, mental and material, normal and abnormal, commonplace and rare, are in some sense continuous, coherent, and amenable to the empirical methods of science. He further believed that scientific knowledge would advance qualitatively only when scientists address *all* phenomena, and in particular those that did not fit readily into prevailing views:

> If nature is to be intelligible to our minds she must be continuous; her action must be uniformitarian and not catastrophic.

A corollary of this belief in the continuity of the universe was that the most reliable means of obtaining knowledge, not only about the physical world but also about mind, is scientific method. However, Myers did not believe that science was the *only* means of acquiring knowledge, but that contemplation, revelation, mystical experience and intuition can also produce profound truths that could be put to the test of rigorous scientific methodology.

Despite his recognition that nineteenth-century science had its limits, Myers objected to the growing segregation between science and metaphysics, science and religion, volition and determinism, or mind and matter. With *tertium quid* uppermost in his mind, Myers believed that the challenge to science does not end, but begins precisely when one comes up against two contradictory findings, positions or theories, and that breakthroughs occur when one continues to work with conflicting data and ideas until a new picture emerges that can put conflicts and paradoxes in a new light or a larger perspective.

Myers protested against limiting science to the existing subject matter, methods and concepts of the physical sciences by conceding prematurely those questions about the nature of the relationship between mental and physical phenomena – going beyond the prevailing but ultimately vague assumptions of concomitance – are scientifically unapproachable. Instead, Myers writes:

> The only line of demarcation that science can draw is between things which can, or which cannot, be cognised by our existing faculties, a line that is by no means permanent and immovable. On the contrary, it is the continual work of science to render that which is incognisable cognisable, that which is imperceptible perceptible.

Myers would have also lamented the premature limitation of psychology's subject matter and methods. He resisted psychology's attempts to separate experimental method from subjective experience.

The challenge to psychology, as Myers saw it, was to bring scientific method to bear on highly personal *experiential* phenomena, and this approach became increasingly important in the study of mystical experience. In sympathy with Myers' *tertium quid* approach to the study of the ecstatic state, Underhill declares that there are three ways to study mystical experience, the physical, the psychological and the mystical, and she states that:

> Many of the deplorable misunderstandings and still more deplorable mutual recriminations which surround its [mysticism] discussion come from the refusal of experts in one of these three branches to consider the results arrived at by the other two.

The most basic problem in Myers' time was to translate from metaphysical to empirical form the question of mind-body concomitance. Most scientists (then and now) concluded that the mind-body problem is no longer an open empirical question. This was because advances in physical science seemed to render it certain that mind is a product of the nervous system and wholly dependent on it. But for Myers this was not only still very much an empirical question but the basic theoretical question at the very heart of psychology. Myers argued that the principle of concomitance which states that "for every mental state there is a correlative nervous state" has not resolved the question because it is a neutral statement. Moreover, to

continue merely to observe this parallelism will not advance our knowledge in any qualitative sense.

> We do not know whether the mental energy precedes or follows on the cerebral change, nor whether the two are somehow connected, but different aspects of the same fact.

Myers believed that psychologists needed to single out for special attention those situations where the normal relationship between mental and physiological functioning becomes altered, or unsynchronised in some way. In particular he believed that the emerging field of the study of "subliminal phenomena" (occurring within the subconscious) had enormous potential for increasing scientific knowledge about the relationship between mental and physiological processes. Such phenomena suggested to Myers that the correlation between mind and brain may not be quite as straightforward as it appeared under normal circumstances.

The study of subliminal phenomena, which was expanding rapidly during the nineteenth century, increasingly turned up phenomena that were difficult to reconcile with the mechanistic theory of mind. For example, psychosomatic phenomena such as those associated with hypnosis and hysteria suggest that alterations in mental states or processes can have dramatic effects on physiological processes. Such phenomena could reveal the possibility of manipulating under experimental conditions such mental states as the independent or causal variable that could affect physical processes.

Many subliminal phenomena, such as hysterical anaesthesia or hypnotic hallucinations occurring under conditions where physical pathology is unlikely, sometimes resemble phenomena that are clearly associated with neuropathology. These phenomena suggest that similar effects might not always have similar causes; a blister, for example, might have a physical cause such as a burn, or a hypnotic suggestion. Myers urged the importance of studying such phenomena to determine whether, and under what conditions, mind might be an active initiating factor. Finally, more extreme phenomena (such as telepathy) even more clearly suggest that the mental and physical processes do not always operate in the accustomed manner.

Myers believed that hypnosis was potentially one of the most effective methods, and one of the most important sources of knowledge about psycho-physiological functioning, and he was critical of psychology for not

exploiting this potential. “We have to regret the lamentable scarcity of purely psychological experiments over the whole hypnosis field”. Myers believed that a comparison of hysterical and neurological disorders might reveal much about the nature and extent of psychological processes as causal, especially the degree to which they are dependent on neurological conditions, or, conversely, could themselves alter these conditions.

Just as subliminal phenomena were showing mind to be more extensive and of a different nature than was previously assumed, so late nineteenth-century physics was showing that the physical universe was more extensive, and possibly of a different nature than was previously assumed. Science was beginning to reveal just how limited our sense perception really was.

The discovery of *electro-magnetic radiation* and the concept of *ether*, a non-material substance that filled empty space and acting as a medium for the transmission of radiation and light, had begun to reveal just how limited our sensory perceptions are. According to Myers:

> Science cannot conjecture beforehand how many distinct but coexisting environments may now surround us.... her own history has been one of constantly widening perceptions.

Myers realised the importance to the mind-matter problem of this dawning realisation. He cautioned that we must be ready to conceive other invisible environments or co-existences, and to relax our rigidity in the concept of *space*, which he regarded as an obstacle to our understanding of communication.

Myers repeatedly emphasised that such unseen environments must somehow be fundamentally continuous and interrelated with the one we know through our sensory perception. “If an unseen world exists .... we must in some sense be in it”.

Myers was motivated by the expectation that a combined study of the unsuspected range of mind, and the previously unsuspected properties and extent of matter, would begin to suggest novel and unprecedented ways of understanding the relationship between the two. Nineteenth-century physics and the study of subliminal phenomena were showing that our conceptions of both were inadequate and incomplete, and Myers concluded that the old dichotomy of dualism and materialism were equally inadequate and incomplete. In agreement with Myers, his colleague Edmund Gurney commented:

> The line between the material and the immaterial may mean little more than the line between what we can detect or register with our senses or instruments than the phenomena which they cannot.

While accepting the validity of established scientific laws, Myers did not preclude the possibility of there being further laws that can be discovered and utilised in the spirit of rigorous investigation. The belief that the universe is naturalistic, cosmological and evolutionary, and not the result of a specially authorised interference such as God, did not, for Myers, exclude the possibility that there may be a scheme of laws which new sciences, such as psychology, may yet discover. Although Myers was on the right track, it was a little too early for him to imagine the strides yet to be taken in the field of quantum theory.

Myers rejected both supernaturalism and the prevalent form of naturalism in favour of a different, expanded concept of scientific naturalism. He repudiated the distinction between the two and expressed his belief that is it possible to reconcile the conflict between science and religion, which too often assumes a barren contradiction, and Myers claimed that, in order to do so, we must reject such phrases as "violations of the order of Nature". Myers subsequently rejected the word "supernatural" altogether as meaningless, and maintained that everything in the universe is "natural". He thus claims:

> When we speak of an abnormal phenomenon we do not mean one which contravenes natural laws, but one which exhibits them in an unusual or inexplicable form .

In summary, the general purposes and principles on which Myers based his approach to psychological research were as follows: to maintain a belief in the ultimate rationality and continuity or interrelatedness of all phenomena, mental as well as physical; to attempt to establish a new and wider perspective on old problems concerning the nature of mind by extending psychology's range of observation and data beyond ordinary, familiar phenomena and by broadening its concepts through continually examining assumptions, hypotheses and views that run contrary to those that are accepted as definitive.

On the basis of his *tertium quid* approach, Myers made two major contributions to psychology. First, he developed a theoretical model of mind that was an important attempt to move beyond the two diametrically opposed views of monism and dualism and thereby provide a more comprehensive model. Secondly, he developed numerous lines of enquiry through which he thought that the mind-body problem could be approached and resolved empirically.

A Revised Scientific framework

Throughout this examination I have made observations regarding the potential value of *personal experience* in scientific enquiry, and I shall now consider what value *experience* can contribute to scientific knowledge through a broader scientific framework. By experience I mean the value of the experience of being possessed or influenced by non-corporeal entities one's self, and the experience of clinicians and researchers who have witnessed or provided effective remedies for the maladaptive outcomes of spirit possession and influence. I have hypothesised that those who have either experienced or witnessed possession phenomena will have a different perspective and a different scientific framework in comparison with those who have not had or witnessed such phenomena. These are issues that involve the philosophical debate regarding the value of empirical knowledge in contrast with beliefs that are passed on by others, the value of empirical data without a theory to accommodate it, and the value of a theory without empirical data to support it.

Scientific framework, in essence, deals with the question: "How do we know what we think we know?" According to Willis Harman, former Director of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, there is no single scientific framework of science. For example the scientific framework of physics is very different from that of cultural anthropology. However, because the reductionist, positivist scientific framework of the physical sciences has proven to be so powerful in terms of prediction, control and the generation of technologies, it has tended to dominate. In that dominant, mainstream scientific framework, consciousness is considered to be epiphenomenal – that is to be explained in terms of its presumed physical causes. William James' scientific philosophy of *radical empiricism* espouses a very different scientific framework. Like any form of scientific framework it admits data through the senses, but it also encompasses the broad spectrum of inner

realities within the subjective life of the person. James defined the terms of his radical empiricism thus:

> To be radical, empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced.

For such a philosophy, the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as *real* as anything else in the system, since its effects are real. The sensory and emotional effect on an individual of an experience can be profound and life-changing, and, as William James took such pains to illustrate in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience,* religious experience should not be ignored by scientific enquiry. James went further than just asking scientists to not ignore religious experience – he advocated a "science of religions".

Putting religion and metaphysics to one side, a revised scientific framework for the study of consciousness that can incorporate the *experience* of possession by a consciousness other than one's own is necessary if science has anything to contribute to our understanding of these phenomena, and Myers' concept of the permeable Subliminal Self (which I explain in the next chapter) certainly seems to provide such a theoretical framework.

According to Willis Harman, the many aspects of consciousness that need to be dealt with by psychology should include: intentionality (volition), attention, creativity, memory and synchronicity. Harman wrote his suggestions in 2001, whereas Myers started his work in 1882, and it is my contention that, as a pioneer in the study of consciousness, Myers' methods and theories could have made a significantly greater contribution to modern consciousness studies had his work not been ignored by so many research psychologists for so long.

Chapter Six

Myers' Model of Mind

As a continuation of the previous chapter where I positioned Myers' conceptual framework into context with nineteenth-century psychology, this chapter explains Myers' *model of mind*, together with a summary of the ideas and theories of some of his supporters and of those whose theories were in conflict with his. An understanding of Myers' model of mind enables us to make sense of various related concepts such as sensory and motor automatisms, multiple personality, dissociation and hypnosis.

Sensory and Motor Automatisms and Mediumship

Myers considered all products of automatic writing and non-volitional speaking to be psychological *automatisms*, whether they are purported to originate from the spirits of the dead or are expressions of some hidden part of the writer or speaker. He insisted that even if there were cases of actual communication with spirits through these automatic means, they must first be investigated as psychological phenomena that use the same mechanisms for emergence from the subliminal into the supraliminal that all other automatisms use. He insisted that if we receive messages from spirits, they are communicated firstly to some subliminal (unconscious) level of the psyche, after which they rise to the level of the supraliminal (conscious). This means that it is very difficult to discern between messages produced entirely by inner resources and those that might originate from an external source to the individual. This seemingly impossible problem was to lead Myers to develop those research methods that could enable the problem to be solved.

Myers arrived at a model of mind that consisted of multiple layers of consciousness where there existed secondary, or rather, multiple selves, each with its own memory chain. His views were commented on by many of his contemporaries such as William James, Pierre Janet, C.G. Jung and

Morton Prince who found them stimulating and productive. There were others such as Sigmund Freud who opposed them in different ways. I will now examine each of these key thinkers in turn in order to expound on their reception and critique of Myers' model of multiple selves. This critique will help us to understand why Myers' theories became forgotten or ignored by twentieth-century psychology.

Supporters and Critics of Myers' Model

Pierre Janet (1859-1947)

Janet is accredited with developing the concept of dissociation to describe those systems of "fixed ideas" that exist within a subconscious centre of consciousness, but not connected with normal consciousness.

Janet conducted experiments which showed that secondary personalities can influence the ordinary consciousness of an individual without the individual having any awareness of that influence. He said that they can operate in the background in such a way that in hypnotism for instance, an individual may, through post-hypnotic suggestion, carry out actions that do not engage the person's ordinary consciousness. He proposed a synthesising force that in normal people holds all their psychological experiences together in a unity, but in hysterics it is excessively weak and fails in that task. The result is what he called "psychological disaggregation", in which fairly sizeable numbers of psychological phenomena are allowed to escape outside of personal perception.

Janet believed that where a person experiences traumatic events, a greater amount of synthesising energy is needed to preserve psychic unity. In hysterics, with their congenitally low level of synthesising force, the experiences become dissociated and lead to other new subconscious personalities, or become assimilated into already existing secondary personalities.

The therapeutic work of Janet therefore comprised the uncovering of hidden centres of consciousness and dissolving them into one coherent personality. Thus Janet was the first to develop a comprehensive and effective therapy for emotional disorders of the hysterical kind. It was due to his exclusive work with hysterics that Janet came to believe that the presence of covert centres of consciousness was invariably pathological.

Myers agreed that Janet's work was important but incomplete because he worked exclusively with hysterics. Myers experiments were conducted with mentally healthy individuals who were able to demonstrate automatic writing, and as a result he was able to develop a wide ranging theory of the structure of human consciousness which he named the "Subliminal Self".

William James (1842-1910)

William James agreed with Myers and rejected the notion that automatism, as described by the physiologists, could adequately explain human psychology. He insisted that the subjective, or *introspective* (self-analysis) method, not only provided our most secure psychological knowledge, but also provided a basis for interpreting the facts of brain physiology.

Although James promoted an introspective approach as the most promising available, he had not yet arrived at a model himself that comfortably embraced all available data. James came to acknowledge that Myers provided the framework that was needed by his psychologically based notion of automatisms. In his second Lowell lecture, James defined automatisms in terms drawn from Myers, calling them "sensory and motor messages from the subliminal". He described them as physical or mental activity performed without the awareness of the conscious self, expressing a secondary and hidden dimension of personality. James outspokenly expressed his admiration for Myers and the way he was able to provide a framework that could accommodate a variety of types of human psychological experience under one overarching umbrella.

Prior to the development of Myers' and Janet's theories, cases had been reported in the literature of psychopathology suggesting the presence of more than one centre of consciousness operating in a single individual. The case of "Mary Reynolds", reported by Rev. William Plumer in 1860, manifested two separate personalities that were completely unknown to each other, and the case of "Felida X" reported by Eugene Azam in 1887 is an example of *alternating* personality, where one personality knew of the existence of the other but not vice versa.

Cases such as these were impressive evidence that one individual could have several distinct personalities, each with its own set of memories and

personality characteristics. These cases demonstrated the concept of *alternating* states but provided little evidence of *concurrent* operation of two centres of consciousness at the same time. There was, however, one such case reported that William James described in an article on automatic writing. It concerned a woman, "Anna Windsor", who from the age of 19 suffered outbreaks of bizarre behaviour and acts of self-destructive violence that made it impossible for her to live a normal life. Shortly after her treatment began her right arm became painful and suddenly went limp, hanging by her side. Anna looked at her arm in amazement, believing that it belonged to someone else and that her own right arm was drawn up behind her back. The limp right arm did not respond to pricking or other tests, and Anna viewed it as a foreign object and a nuisance. She considered it to be an intruder and tried to drive it away by biting it. She referred to it as "Stump" or "Old Stump". The right arm appeared to be controlled by a secondary intelligence. When Anna, whilst in a delirium, tried to pull out her own hair with her left hand, the right arm stopped her.

The right arm wrote poetry, partially in Latin (of which Anna had no knowledge), produced messages from allegedly deceased persons, made drawings and communicated in writing with those around her. All these activities strongly suggested an intelligence that was superior to Anna's. When Anna was raving, Old Stump was rational, asking and answering questions in writing. Old Stump seemed never to sleep, but watched over Anna during the night, seeing that she remained covered and rapping on the headboard to awaken Anna's mother when Anna became distressed.

The case of Anna's "Old Stump" clearly illustrates the concept of *concurrent* operation of two centres of consciousness in one individual, each manifesting its own ideas and intentions. Later work by both Janet and Myers indicated the co-temporal status of multiple centres. Myers' automatic writing subjects often wrote from a second centre whilst reading or conversing concurrently with their primary consciousness. Janet's experiments with "Leonie" demonstrated the simultaneous activity of several centres. A similar case of co-consciousness in the case of "Spanish Maria" was reported later in 1919 by Charles Cory in 1919.

James was interested in a further issue discussed by Myers, that of patterns of *mutual awareness* between the concurrently active members of a group of sub-personalities. Myers held that the consciousness of a subliminal personality could have knowledge of the thoughts of another

personality. Myers did not speculate on whether this kind of inclusivity could also occur between two or more subliminal consciousnesses. However, he did indicate that the Subliminal Self (in the sense of the all-embracing and ultimate source of unity beyond the multiplicity of an individual) encompasses all that occurs in the supraliminal and multiple subliminal centres.

Where Myers was intent on conducting experiments to unravel the mysteries of secondary selves, automatic writing and related phenomena, James grappled with the philosophical issues raised by the scientific investigation of human experience. His focus was on reconciliation between scientific methods and religious beliefs, and his major work *Varieties of Religious Experience* sought to tackle this problem. James was not alone, and American psychologist Morton Prince was among the foremost of Myers' contemporaries who investigated issues relating to automatisms and co-consciousness.

Morton Prince (1854-1929)

Morton Prince coined the term "co-consciousness" in 1907 in order to highlight the reality of hidden centres of mental activity and to convey the co-temporality of the multiple centres involved. Prince pointed out that two centres of consciousness need not be unaware of each other. As in the case of Old Stump, there may be one-way or even mutual awareness without affecting the fact of separateness. Like Myers, Prince emphasised that secondary centres show signs of intelligence and cannot be explained in purely physiological terms, and he suggested that each should be treated just as one would treat any separate intelligent person.

Prince's study of the case of "Miss Beauchamp" reported four alternating personalities. Prince was particularly interested in the *inclusivity* aspect of co-consciousness that was demonstrated by the Miss Beauchamp case. Prince coined the term "co-conscious" in order to avoid confusion.

Prince pointed out that all conscious states, "belong to, take part in, or help to make up a self". He added that it is difficult to conceive of a conscious state that is not associated with a self-conscious self. Prince stated that it would seem "queer" to think of a state of consciousness or sensation or perception, or idea, as "off by itself" and not attached to anything we call the self. By emphasising the psychological, Prince insisted that he was not dismissing the physiological, and held that all thought is

correlated with physiological activities. He believed that all mental phenomena would require both a psychological and a physiological explanation.

Although Prince was in agreement with Myers' concepts of secondary selves, together with a psychological explanation in addition to a physiological one, it is difficult to reconcile his notion that all secondary centres of consciousness are to be considered a part of the self.

Prince's report made no claim that outside intelligences were responsible for any of the alternating personalities, and yet personality number 3, "Sally", insisted that she was not of Miss Beauchamp. Sally reported that she remembered Miss Beauchamp as a very small child learning to walk and talk. This implied that Sally had been with Miss Beauchamp from a very early age, but Sally herself was not of such a young age.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Freud saw consciousness as unitary and ruled out any notion of multiple consciousness centres. In a paper entitled *A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis* published in 1912 Freud went into the matter of the unity of consciousness. He made it clear by what he meant by conscious and unconscious:

> Now let us call "conscious" the conception which is present to our consciousness and of which we are aware, and let this be the only meaning of the term "conscious". As for latent conceptions, if we have any reason to suppose that they exist in the mind ... let them be denoted by the term "unconscious". Thus an unconscious conception is one of which we are not aware, but the experience of which we are nevertheless ready to admit on account of other proofs or signs.

Freud's meaning of the word "conscious" was what we might now call *awareness*, and that which may be hidden below the threshold of awareness can be brought forward into our awareness (conscious awareness). He was unable to acknowledge consciousness as a much wider entity, as Myers did.

Myers demonstrated that our normal waking consciousness (the supraliminal) reflects those relatively few elements and processes that have been selected from the more comprehensive consciousness (the Subliminal Self) in our adaptation to the demands of our present environment.

Furthermore, he sought to show that the biological organism, rather than producing consciousness, is the adaptive mechanism that limits and shapes normal waking consciousness from the larger, mostly latent Self. Myers writes:

> The "conscious Self" of each of us, as we call it,—the empirical, the supraliminal Self, as I should prefer to say,—does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only so far as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.

Much of the confusion created in discussions of theoretical models of the structure and nature of consciousness (or mind) arises from the meaning of words to describe those abstract concepts contained within those models. Myers' own debate concerning the relationship between mind and body begins with an interpretation of the word *automatism*.

Further confusion is created with definitions of what constitutes *conscious* and *unconscious*. Some words used by these early psychologists, such as consciousness, mind, self, personality and ego may be interchangeable with each other, and each theorist will have an interpretation of what a specific term means to him. This individual interpretation of the meaning of labels is the first obstacle at arriving at a consensus, and much of what has been written concerning the evolution of psychological thinking has centred on these difficulties.

Another problem is that we tend to think in terms of three-dimensional space. This forces us to imagine the structure of the mind in three-dimensional terms. It is therefore extremely difficult to imagine the mind (or consciousness) as a concept that is not constrained by space or time. In other words, our own way of thinking, or perceiving the world, is an obstacle to our understanding of consciousness itself.

What Myers was trying to do was to reconcile the abnormal, the supernatural and the normal into a continuum of human experience, but his own use of terms such as *subliminal* and *supraliminal* did little to support his ideas in the minds of many. As William James said of Myers' terminology:

> I think the words subliminal and supraliminal unfortunate, but they were probably unavoidable. I think, too, that Myers's belief in the ubiquity and great extent of the Subliminal will demand a far larger number of facts than sufficed to persuade him, before the next generation of psychologists shall become persuaded. He regards the Subliminal as the enveloping mother-consciousness in each of us, from which the consciousness we wet of is precipitated like a crystal. But whether this view get confirmed or get overthrown by future inquiry, the definite way in which Myers has thrown it down is a new and specific challenge to inquiry. For half a century now, psychologists have fully admitted the existence of a subliminal mental region, under the name either of unconscious cerebration or of the involuntary life; but they have never definitely taken up the question of the extent of this region, never sought explicitly to map it out. Myers definitely attacks this problem, which, after him, it will be impossible to ignore.

The real dispute between psychological theories of the nature of consciousness was between Freud and Janet who were both working from their experiences with disturbed patients.

On the view that consciousness can be split in such a way that some ideas or psychical acts could be said to constitute a consciousness which has become estranged from the bulk of conscious activity, Freud acknowledged that such a view might be supported by cases of dual personality such as those proposed by Eugene Azam. However, it would not be appropriate to extend the term conscious so far that it includes a consciousness of which the owner is not aware. Freud believed that it made more sense to say that we are dealing with a “shifting of consciousness”.

Freud distanced himself from the theories of Janet, Myers and others, such as Azam, and rejected any view of unconscious mental activity that could be called co-conscious with ordinary everyday awareness. This theoretical stance made it difficult for psychoanalysis to deal with dissociative disorders, and in 1926, Bernard Hart, in his presidential address to the *British Psychological Society*, took Freud and his followers to task for failing to account for the phenomena of dissociation in their theoretical constructs.

Freud’s explanation was that an incompatible idea becomes repressed from consciousness as a means of ego defence. The repressed ideas persist as a weak memory trace, whilst the effect, which has been separated from the idea, manifests as a somatic symptom. Freud called this condition, “defence hysteria”.

Freud's rejection of the roots of psychoanalysis in the hypnosis/mesmeric tradition were stated and confirmed in *A Note* in 1912, and his opposition to Myers' concept of a Subliminal Self had dramatic effects on the development of psychology and dynamic psychiatry. Freud's psychoanalysis came to dominate modern clinical psychological thinking and in the process squeezed out both the hypnosis tradition and the concept of dissociated selves.

Had he lived long enough to contribute further to the debate I have no doubt in my mind that Myers would have been able to reconcile the differences between the theories of Janet and Freud with his *tertium quid* approach and assimilate them into a cohesive and more comprehensive model of mind.

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)

The founder of *Analytical Psychology*, Jung studied for a time with Janet and was familiar with Myers' writings. In his doctoral thesis on spiritual mediumship, Jung gives reference to Myers' work on automatic writing with his subject "Clelia", where he acknowledges the relevance of the co-consciousness theory. Jung's own developed theory of *complexes* includes the concept that human beings are comprised of many fragmentary personalities. He saw complexes as a collection of ideas and images which cluster around a core that embodies one or more archetypes that are characterised by a common feeling, and he wrote of the fact that the psyche can have a tendency to split:

> Although this tendency is more clearly observable in psychopathology, fundamentally it is a normal phenomenon. The tendency to split means that parts of the psyche detach themselves from consciousness to such an extent that they not only appear to be foreign, but lead to autonomous life of their own. It need not be a question of hysterical multiple personality, or schizophrenic alterations of personality, but merely of so-called "complexes" that come entirely within the scope of the normal.

Jung stated that there is no difference in principle between a fragmentary personality and a "complex" and that experience had showed him that complexes are really splinter psyches. Jung's ideas were in many ways compatible with those of Myers and were not subject to the objections levelled against Freud's single-consciousness theory. Like Myers, Jung

connected the activity of fragmentary personalities with creativity on one hand and mediumship on the other.

Moving on to Jung's own experience in his personal life, we are able to gain another perspective of possession. Jung discovered that his house was filled with earthbound spirits of the deceased, and over the course of three days he engaged them in dialogue and assisted them in moving on. With particular relevance to the serious student of SRT on what the earthbound spirit "knows" Jung writes:

> Apparently, however, the souls of the dead "know" only what they knew at the moment of death, and nothing beyond that. Hence their endeavour to penetrate into life in order to share in the knowledge of men. I frequently have a feeling that they are standing directly behind us, waiting to hear what answer we will give them, and what answer to destiny.

Although not generally recognised as such, Jung can be regarded as the pioneering psychologist practitioner of SRT, where he successfully assisted the earthbound spirits of deceased persons to move on to a more appropriate realm of existence. It is in the difference between the theories of Jungian analytical psychology and Jung's personal experience that we can see the divergence between the methodological atheism of modern psychology, the methodological agnosticism of Frederic Myers and the Gnosticism of Jung.

Freud's model became the accepted foundation for modern therapeutics and has been a dominating influence in psychological thought right up to the present. Subsequently, the use of hypnosis as an experimental tool and as a therapeutic approach has been sidestepped in favour of methods that are centred more on cognitive processes. This has resulted in research into those areas that continue to be considered as "paranormal" being primarily conducted without the expressed aid of hypnosis.

In my conclusion to this chapter, I would argue that Frederic Myers proposed a model of mind that may prove to be of value in helping to explain, in simple terms, what modern consciousness research is uncovering with reference to states of mind, intuition and creativity. Furthermore, a revised understanding of the nature of consciousness is central to the conceptual frameworks of SRT, and the process of learning and accommodating valuable information through expanding consciousness and intuition.

Myers' model of mind, as expounded in his collective work *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, provided a foundation for his formulation of theories regarding what he called "psychological automatisms" and a variety of issues related to them. These issues surrounding psychological automatisms are central to our understanding of methods of discernment between psychopathology and veridical spiritual manifestations. The central features of Myers' theory of psychological automatisms are summarised as follows:

1. Myers argued that phenomena such as automatic writing, hysteria, spiritual mediumship, lucid dreams, hypnotic states, and creative imagination force investigators to look beyond accepted psychological explanations and to position alternative centres of consciousness outside of normal, or primary conscious awareness as sources of a variety of complex automatic actions and perceptions.
2. He insisted that these conscious centres must be regarded, at least in well-developed cases, as personalities or selves – intelligent sources of thoughts, feelings and actions that possess their own memory chains and exhibit a psychological cohesiveness. He indicated that these centres are not necessarily merely alternating states, but may operate concurrently with what he called the *supraliminal* self and with each other. Myers noted that the secondary or subliminal conscious centres sometimes display an awareness of each other. He also wrote about a kind of *inclusiveness* in which subliminal centres may sometimes be aware of the thoughts and actions of the primary or supraliminal consciousness, as well as the environment in which the supraliminal consciousness exists. This awareness is however not always reciprocal.
3. Myers recognised that there is a strong linkage between automatisms and those psychic phenomena (what we now call "psi" capabilities) that are associated with spiritualist mediumship, somnambulism and spontaneous sleep-walking. Beginning with his study of automatic writing in the 1880s, Myers demonstrated that information produced by the communicating consciousness was sometimes veridical and could not be accounted for in terms of knowledge gained through sense experience and other so-called "normal" means. Indications of

supernormal faculty were discovered throughout the range of sensory and motor automatism he studied.

4. Myers further hypothesised an "I" (or ultimate Subliminal Self) that embraces both the subliminal and the supraliminal consciousness is aware of all activity that occurs in each. This Self has roots in a transcendental environment of some sort, accounting for its supernormal capabilities. It provides the over-arching unity of the psyche, reconciling its "colonial" versus "unitary" aspects, and it survives the shock of physical death.

We have seen during the course of Part I that the *altered state of consciousness* (ASC) emerged as a recurring theme in possession phenomena. We have also seen in this chapter that hypnosis has played a significant role in the development of Myers' theory on his model of mind. Hypnosis has also been a significant factor in both experimental research and in therapeutics with an understanding of ego-states, dissociated parts, multiple personality and the possibility of spirit possession. In the next chapter I shall explore hypnosis more fully in its relationship with ASCs and why Myers insisted that this was the avenue to use in the testing of hypotheses relating to the nature of the human psyche.

Chapter Seven

Hypnosis as Experimental Method

Of all the many methods he used, hypnosis is the method chosen by Myers as the one that produced the most significant results, and the one that he recommended *all* psychologists use in their investigations into the nature of mind, consciousness and personality. And yet, it is still the most under-used, misunderstood and misrepresented concept by mainstream psychology and medical science to this day. Furthermore, one of the principle reasons for this deficiency is no different today from when Myers and his colleagues decided to form the Society for Psychical Research, and that is the damage that was, and continues to be done to both Spiritualism and to hypnosis by the charlatans and stage performers who exploited them for entertainment and self-aggrandisement. On the importance of hypnosis in relation to the evolution of consciousness, Myers writes:

> First among our experimental methods I must speak of hypnotism. We see here the influence exercised by suggestion and self-suggestion on higher types of faculty, supernormal as well as normal, on character, on personality. It is on this side, indeed that the outlook is the most deeply interesting. Man is in course of evolution; and the most pregnant hint which these nascent experiments have yet given him is that it may be in his power to hasten his own evolution in ways previously unknown.

Myers was critical of nineteenth-century psychology for viewing hypnosis and related phenomena as subjects of curiosity, instead of integrated factors of human experience. Thus he writes:

> Hypnotism is too often presented as though it comprised a quite isolated group of phenomena. Until it is more definitely correlated with other phases of personality, it can hardly occupy the place which it merits in any psychological scheme.

Myers' decision to use hypnosis as an experimental method was based on his observations of the unusual phenomena exhibited by some spontaneous somnambulists, sleep-walkers and hysterics. He observed that in several cases of hysteria there was, what he called, "an aspect from the deepest stratum of the subliminal self" that demonstrated "beneficent subliminal powers". He further observed that these therapeutic interventions from a hidden part of the personality became manifest during the somnambulistic state or "hypnotic-trance". He acknowledges that whilst observing the therapeutic phenomena, he paid little attention at the time to the nature of the trance state, other than to assume that it was some kind of spontaneous, artificial or induced somnambulism "which seemed to facilitate the beneficial control of the organism which spontaneous sleep-waking states had exercised in a fitful way". In his observations of hysterics, spontaneous somnambulists, sleep-walkers and spiritualist mediums, Myers could see that there was a similarity, or connection between them all that needed to be researched and acknowledged as a part of normal human experience.

In order to avoid being influenced unduly by others' interpretations of the phenomena of hypnotic trance, Myers chose to place himself in a position of naiveté in which he had no more knowledge of the phenomena of trance states than anyone else.

This is how he summarised his perspective on the use of the hypnotic trance:

> We desire to summon at our will, and to subdue to our use, those rarely emergent sleep-waking faculties. On the physical side, we desire to develop their inhibition to pain and their reinforcement of energy; on their intellectual side, their concentration of attention; on their emotional side, their sense of freedom, expansion, joy. Above all, we desire to get hold of those supernormal faculties – telepathy and clairvoyance – of which we have caught fitful glimpses in somnambulism and dream.

Mesmerism and hypnosis had been investigated as both a scientific curiosity and a metaphysical phenomenon since Mesmer proffered his theory of *animal magnetism* in 1766, but at the time of Myers it was still in its infancy as a psychological method. It had been used with great success by surgeons such as James Esdaile in India and John Elliotson in London prior to the discovery of anaesthetics, but its theoretical implications remained largely unexamined. Myers emphasised that the usefulness of

hypnosis as an experimental method depended largely on an adequately broad conception of the nature and the phenomena of hypnosis. Although the terms “mesmerism” and “hypnosis” are often used interchangeably, the former simply being used as an earlier form of the latter, there is in fact a distinct difference between the two. Two schools of thought not only emphasised different descriptions of the trance-induction procedures, but also radically different associated phenomena. Myers and Gurney felt the need to keep both interpretations alive and arrive at a better, more comprehensive view. They believed that the mesmeric hypothesis (magnetism) and the hypnotic (suggestion) hypothesis had merit, since they both had empirical observations to support them. But they also believed each of them to be inadequate.

Myers thought that the mysterious force that Mesmer called *animal magnetism* probably does not exist in a material form as Mesmer had hypothesised, but rather as a psychological one. Likewise the concept of *suggestion* is inadequate because suggestion itself remains wholly unexplained. Myers and Gurney warned against abandoning the Mesmer hypothesis completely in a too-eager readiness to adopt the suggestion hypothesis as a dogma. Myers was fearful that the true value of experimental hypnosis would be lost if researchers abandoned it because it was explained away as the power of suggestion, auto-suggestion, or the suggestibility of vulnerable persons. For Myers, the words “suggestion”, “self-suggestion” and “suggestibility” are; “mere names which disguise our ignorance”.

As his experiments developed, Myers was able to demonstrate that, although suggestion did have a significant part to play under certain conditions, it was not a comprehensive answer to all hypnotic phenomena. Myers was to discover that suggestion did not play a significant role in magnetism, but suggestion could be used to induce a hypnotic trance by direct voice or telepathically conveyed with no audible voice. The fact that trance could be induced from a distance without the knowledge or consent of the percipient reveals that not all hypnotic phenomena are dependent on the principle of suggestion.

On the measurement of trance depth, Gurney held the view that the main distinction of kind between his “alert” and “deep” stage of the artificially-induced hypnotic trance was to be found in the domain of memory, while memory also afforded the means for distinguishing the hypnotic state as a

whole from the normal one. As a general rule, the events of ordinary life are remembered in the trance, while the trance events are forgotten on waking, but tend to return to the memory on re-hypnotisation. But the most interesting part of his observations consisted in showing alternations of memory in the alert and deep stages of the trance itself; the ideas impressed in the one state being almost always forgotten in the other, as invariably again remembered when the former state recurs.

Myers commented on the similarities between artificially induced hypnotic stages with their separate memory chains, and the phenomena of the morbid alternating personalities that were observed in cases of disintegrated personality. Learning from these experiments, Myers writes:

> The hypnotic stages are in fact secondary or alternating personalities of very shallow type, but for that very reason all the better adapted for teaching us from what kinds of subliminal disaggregation the more serious splits in personality take their rise.

Myers' contention that there was a relationship between the concept of memory chains and dual or multiple personality was not the only value derived from using hypnosis as an experimental tool. He saw hypnosis not only as a gateway to the deeper recesses of the Subliminal Self, but he pondered the possibilities of hypnosis as a gateway to other worlds beyond the physical:

> Deeper still lies the stage of highest interest – that sleep-waking in which the subliminal self is at last set free, is at last not only able to receive but to respond; when it begins to tell us the secrets of the sleeping phase of personality, beginning with directions as to the conduct of the trance or of the cure, and going on to who knows what insights into who knows what world afar?

The above statement has far-reaching and profound implications; the possibilities for psychology to discover "who knows what world afar", as Myers put it, ought to be motivation enough for the curious scientist.

On the continuum of human experience Myers made the connection between hysteria and other associated pathologies at one end of the continuum with enhancements of human function such as super-normal cognitive abilities and creative genius at the other extreme.

Supernormal Powers

The phenomena of hypnosis observed by Myers often included enhancements of cognitive processes. Experiments in post-hypnotic suggestion by Gurney showed that some level of subliminal consciousness can conduct complicated arithmetical calculations or keep track of a specific, often lengthy lapse of time. From Myers' conception of hypnosis as a means of accessing subliminal strata of consciousness, it follows that phenomena suggestive of super-normal modes of perception, such as telepathy and clairvoyance, would also be observed in connection with hypnosis. In the century since Myers' early experiments, many studies have supported his prediction that hypnosis can sometimes elicit or enhance super-normal functioning.

The most significant discovery from my research into the work of Myers is the concept of *telepathic hypnosis*. This is, I believe, the core concept in the influence of discarnate spirit entities on consciousness, and must stand out as probably the most important of all discoveries in applied experimental psychology. My own personal discovery of this phenomenon was a complete surprise and a revelation that demanded explanation. Subsequently, through research reading of the documented evidence on telepathic hypnosis, I fail to understand why such an important facet of human communication has been discarded and avoided by modern scientific enquiry.

Telepathic Hypnotism

The concept of hypnosis at a distance, or *telepathic-hypnosis*, was first documented by the Marquis de Puységur, a disciple of Franz Mesmer in 1785. He agreed with Mesmer that the influence of what they then perceived as "magnetic fluid" was not impeded by physical obstacles. This meant that the magnetiser could magnetise through walls and from one dwelling to another. Puységur was not content to accept the theories of others and commented:

> This is the kind of thing that is impossible to prove by rational arguments and for which experience alone can provide certainty. For that reason, it is to men who are aware of this small part of their power that I now direct some recommendations about the best way to use it.

Puységur was aware of the possible detrimental effects of inducing somnambulism at a distance, and he records cases where some patients, whilst on their way to visit him for a consultation, actually arrived already in a somnambulistic state. Puységur was also aware of other possible dangers:

> Apart from this inconvenience, there is another one very much to be feared – the risk that some extraneous factor will interfere with the effect produced at a distance. If, for example, the effect one produces is somnambulism, one must know very well how susceptible this peaceful state is to being disturbed by the least extraneous circumstance, which can then cause truly miserable confusion.

In other words, the somnambulist who was not being guarded or directed by the magnetiser would be vulnerable to all kinds of circumstance that could cause problems. Two important factors emerge from Puységur's observations regarding telepathic hypnosis: the importance of *experience* in contrast to rational argument in determining its credibility; and the *vulnerability* of the unsupervised subject. The importance of experience is a recurring theme throughout this book and the foundation of a revised scientific framework, and so too is the problem of vulnerability to the unprotected and uninformed in all matters concerning possession and other forms of spirit influence to the vulnerable mind.

Frederic Myers, like Puységur one hundred years before him, was not content to leave such phenomena to rationalist argument, and he sought to gather evidence to demonstrate that suggestion was not an adequate explanation for all hypnotic phenomena:

> The evidence for telepathy – for psychical influence from a distance – has grown to goodly proportions, for a new form of experiment has been found possible from which the influence of suggestion can be entirely excluded. It has now, as I shall presently try to show, been actually proved that the hypnotic trance can be induced from a distance so great, and with precautions so complete, that telepathy or some similar supernormal influence is the only efficient cause which can be conceived.

Pierre Janet arranged for a series of experiments with his well-known subject, "Madame B" (Leonie) and the first experiments were carried out

with her at Le Havre with the assistance of Dr Gibert, Leonie's physician. These experiments are described in the *Bulletins de la Societe de Psychologie Physiologique*, in 1886 Tome I., p. 24, and in the *Revue Philosophique*, August in 1886.

Myers expressed his good fortune to be invited to witness the experiments of Janet with Leonie, and was impressed with the precautions taken by Janet to avoid any influences that could be attributable to the power of suggestion:

> These experiments are not easy to manage, since it is essential at once to prevent the subject from suspecting that the experiment is being tried, and also to provide for his safety in the event of its success. In Dr Gibert's experiment, for instance, it was a responsible matter to bring this elderly woman through the streets of Le Havre. It was needful to provide her with an unnoticed escort; and, in fact, several persons had to devote themselves for some hours to a single experiment.

Myers uses extracts from Janet's report to emphasise the simple fact that the subject was being hypnotized from a distance by Dr Gibert, not only with no influence from the power of direct suggestion, but against her will:

> October 3, 1885. Gibert tries to put her to sleep from a distance of half a mile; Janet finds her awake; puts her to sleep; she says, "I know very well that Dr Gibert tried to put me to sleep, but when I felt him I looked for some water, and put my hands in cold water. I don't want people to put me to sleep in that way; it puts me out, and makes me look silly." She had in fact held her hands in water at the time when Gibert willed her to sleep. October 9. Gibert succeeds in a similar attempt; she says in trance, "Why does Dr Gibert put me to sleep from his house? I had not time to put my hands in my basin".

Myers was never content to depend on just one case to support his hypotheses, and he collected accounts from other reliable sources for evidence of telepathic hypnosis. He further cites an account, contributed by a Dr E. Gley that was published in *Tribune Medicale* in May 1875, of a 14 year-old girl that initiated a series of over one hundred experiments conducted under a variety of conditions.

Although temporarily abandoned following Myers' death in 1901, experiments with telepathic hypnosis did not end with Myers, Janet and Gley. In the 1920s, Inspired by the work of Myers and Janet, Leonid

Leonidovich Vasiliev, Professor of Physiology at the Institute of Brain Research in the University of Leningrad, took up the challenge to find a theory to explain telepathy in the face of very difficult political circumstances.

As a neurologist, Vasiliev's interest in telepathy and hypnosis at a distance was to test the theory that telepathic communication was effected by an electromagnetic field.

Vasiliev and his colleagues at Leningrad University tested the theory that telepathy worked by the transmission of thoughts from one person to another by electromagnetic wave resonance. Their experiments confirmed that the effects of the suggestions delivered to a percipient by telepathy could be measured by EEG by recording differences in brain activity.

It was believed at the time that the electromagnetic waves measured by EEG were carriers of thought waves from person to person, and this provided the theory of the transmission of thoughts by telepathy. According to Vasiliev, the idea was advanced by academic P.P. Lazarev in 1920 who suggested:

> We must thus consider the possibility of catching in space a thought in the shape of an electromagnetic wave; this would seem to be one of the most interesting problems in the whole of biological physics. One must of course realise the immense difficulties that stand in the way of detecting such waves. Many years of strenuous work will be required before isolating and demonstrating these phenomena, but they are inescapably forecast by the ionic theory of stimulation. The transmission of thought processes through space provides a firm basis for an explanation of the phenomena of hypnosis, and this concept is of the greatest interest both from a theoretical and a practical point of view.

And so it was that scientists and academics had such faith in the new electronics of the emerging technological age that they firmly believed that the development of sensitive instruments would one day be able to capture a thought by electronic means as it was transmitted from person to person, and a great deal of effort was expended in trying to develop the technology that would one day capture a thought in transmission.

Vasiliev acknowledges that the Society for Psychical Research based in London recorded many incidences of spontaneous telepathy over very long distances, from London to Australia for example. He recognises the work of Richet, Warcolliet and Osty, and at the Third Congress of Psychical

Research in 1927 Erscollier reported experiments conducted between New York and Paris in both directions with success.

Vasiliev cites many other successful experiments carried out by the Athens Society for Psychical Research in 1925. The experiments were conducted between Athens and Paris (2101 km) Warsaw and Athens (1597 km) and Vienna and Athens (1284 km). Encouraged by the success of these and other experiments too numerous to mention here, Vasiliev conducted experiments between Leningrad and Sebastopol, which is a distance of about 1,700 km as the crow flies.

Vasiliev's experiments produced results that were rigorously subjected to tests of statistical significance and showed that telepathically induced hypnosis over long distances was a scientific reality. He knew that hypnosis could be induced by the wilful intention of a hypnotist over long distances, and his observations of the effects of suggestions proved it. These results further reinforced the experiments conducted by others in Athens, New York and elsewhere, and there was general agreement that although the results were conclusive, they were difficult for mainstream science to acknowledge because they could not be accommodated within the prevailing scientific paradigm. The theory that thoughts are carried by electromagnetic waves was never proven.

The successes of Vasiliev's and others' experiments, and their collective failure to arrive at a theory to explain them led to increases year-on-year of more and more researchers becoming convinced of the real existence of what Vasiliev came to call "mental suggestion" and to study the various aspects of these "complex" phenomena.

In 1947 Thouless and Weisner introduced the term "psi" to identify the mysterious link, or unidentified energy form that linked people in telepathy and other psychic phenomena and debates took place during the 1950s when the term "parapsychologist" emerged to describe those who took the task on, including J.B. Rhine, head of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University.

As an expression of the general attitude of mainstream science at this time, a Dr George Price wrote in an article entitled, *Science and the Supernatural*, where he writes, "…the published works on this subject are open to criticism of the experimental techniques employed". By this time the scientific investigation into telepathic hypnosis, due to the great difficulty in arriving at the theory to explain it, had been reduced to "card

guessing", and although Rhine's results were compelling, Price's criticism offered only two alternative explanations. One explanation was that the methods were flawed and the other was that they were fraud.

Such debates detracted from the original observations of spontaneous telepathy over great distances and the objective of testing the findings of the early magnetisers such as Mesmer and his contemporaries that an altered state of consciousness (or trance) could be induced from a distance was lost from the scientific agenda. The practice of experimenting to find a theory to explain telepathic-hypnosis disappeared from view until it was the Russians, once again, whose experiments in psychic spying were brought to the attention of the United States Department of Defense. We take up the story again in Chapter Ten where I look at Myers concepts in relation to quantum theory and "remote viewing".

It is by discovering that telepathic-hypnosis was acknowledged, not only by Myers, but also by a vast and impressive line-up of scientists with credentials similar to Vasiliev, as a scientifically testable reality that the wider implications of Myers' methods and theories begin to impinge tentatively on our most commonly held beliefs about the nature of mind.

These scientific facts, although the electromagnetic theory and mechanistic framework are still unable to accommodate them, still demand that we seriously attend to our subliminal influences on each other – for good or for ill. When a spiritualist medium "listens" to those spirits that communicate through her it is called "channelling", and could provisionally be regarded as an act of *telepathic communication*. When the spirit wants to take control of the medium's faculties in order to effect a more direct communication, and the medium agrees to that and goes into a trance, then that can be described as positive or "invited" possession. In such instances, the medium's mind "dissociates" and steps aside, so to speak, and permits the spirit entity to take control of her communication infrastructure (brain and voice box). When this is done without the knowledge or consent of the subject then it is "uninvited" possession. When the discarnate spirit wants to induce a trance in the subject without her consent then this is achieved by "telepathic hypnosis". Thus, it is my contention that the concept of *hypnosis at a distance* is at the very core of possession phenomenology, and the remainder of this book will provide further evidence in support of this hypothesis.

To ignore the importance of telepathic hypnosis is misleading to the student of hypnotic phenomena as Myers' experiments will testify, and it is equally important that the evidence for hypnosis at a distance is presented in order to support the argument that hypnosis is a gateway to a vast array of psychological and spiritual domains.

Modern theories of hypnosis, being predominantly based on the power of suggestion, cannot explain the hypnotic power of silent hand passes (mesmeric technique). Neither can they explain hypnosis at a distance. But telepathy does open one alternative avenue of enquiry. To accommodate *all* hypnosis phenomena, including hypnosis at a distance, the epiphenomenal concept needs to be augmented with its opposite, that is a mind that is *not* brain dependent.

Stage Hypnosis – a Form of Possession?

In some instances of stage hypnosis, I contend that the hypnotist takes possession of the subject by imposing his will on the organism, whilst the conscious-self dissociates from the body and observes itself. I am not aware of any published works on this hypothesis as it applies to stage hypnotism, but my own questioning of some subjects who have participated in stage performances confirm that they perceived themselves as if they were outside of their bodies and watched what they did in response to the hypnotist's suggestions. This is a form of out-of-body experience (OBE) that supports the hypothesis that the mind is not brain dependent. Other subjects reported having no memory of what they did in response to the hypnotist's suggestions at all. It may be hypothesised that those with no memory of the experience were dissociated to the degree that they created a sub-personality with its autonomous memory chain of the event that could only be recalled with re-hypnotisation. This hypothesis prompts us to question what memories the dissociated self might have. A similar question could be asked of the consciousness that becomes dissociated at the time a real possessing entity is in full and complete control.

Yet other participants in stage hypnosis, experienced themselves as remaining within their bodies, and believed what the hypnotist told them was real, when in reality what was happening in their mental perception was imagined. In other words, the hallucination was perceived as real according to *belief* but not in fact. The experience of this kind of hallucination is subjectively very real, and it is this notion of *experience*

that is extremely important in our appreciation and understanding of these concepts. It is not possible to understand such notions until they are experienced personally. Intellectual understanding is not sufficient and is not a substitute for actual experience. In these situations, the belief remains intact until such time as the hypnotist delivers a suggestion to cancel the hallucination, and it is only after the suggestion is cancelled, or overcome, that the reality of the situation convinces the subject that he/she has been given a hallucination by suggestion. This can be a profound and sometimes deeply disturbing experience because it challenges our own sense of autonomy and free-will.

Modern hypnosis theories ignore our spiritual nature and are therefore unable to acknowledge the spiritual nature of hypnosis. It is therefore no surprise that modern theorists are unable to explain the full range of hypnotic phenomena and the mechanisms that underpin them.

Chapter Eight

Hallucinations – Sensory Automatisms

There is a difference between what is veridical (originating from a verified external source), that which originates in the subliminal (subconscious) and what is created in the imagination (autogenic). The question that this chapter raises, and attempts to answer is: "How can we tell the difference?" But first we need to ask: "Why is it important?"

It is important because the SRT practitioner (or any other healer, doctor or psychologist) needs to be able to treat a person with an appropriate remedy for their distress. Putting it simply, if a person is diagnosed with mental illness on the basis that they are hallucinating, but the sensory impression of their hallucination is the result of an event that is external in origin (veridical), then the diagnosis is incorrect and the therapy that is based on that incorrect diagnosis will inevitably fail. This raises the further question of whether an external source for what may be diagnosed as a hallucination can be verified scientifically. It further raises the question: "Why do so many attempts at healing auditory hallucinations fail?"

The evidence presented in this chapter examines Myers' and his colleagues' attempts to demonstrate that an external agent can bypass the expectations of a subject and that the power of suggestion is not a sufficient explanation for all phenomena associated with "automatisms".

Myers used the term "automatisms" to provide the link between a range of automatic phenomena and hysteria, and argued that automatic writing is just one facet among many others including hallucinations, hypnosis, double personality, and mediumship – that is that they are all connected facets of the one subject. William James referred to this collectivisation of similar facets as a "great simplification" - one that places hallucinations and non-volitional impulses under the common theme of "sensory and motor automatisms". "Automatisms" gave these phenomena a unifying conceptual term and Myers suggested that a positive connection between them is; "an

introduction into a realm where the limitations of organic life can no longer be assumed to persist".

Myers suggested that messages that are not initiated by an automatist's own volition come into consciousness from some form of intelligence, whether from within the *subliminal* (his name for the unconscious) or from an external source.

As pioneers in the study of eye-witness testimony, Myers, Gurney and Podmore first attempted to fit hallucinations into a general scheme of perception in 1884. They argued that "visual perceptions" and "hallucinations" are produced by the same neurological sensory apparatus, but in the former the primary stimulation has come from the sensory mechanism of the eyes, whereas in the latter the stimulus has come from mental processes directly activating the relevant cortical areas of the brain. Hallucinations therefore fall on a continuum with all other perceptual processes, including normal sight and hearing, but also after-images, illusions, memory images and dreams. In other words, the brain does the "seeing" irrespective of whether the stimulus is external or internal.

In two surveys Gurney and colleagues presented statistical evidence, where 10% of respondents reported that they had experienced a hallucination whilst in a state of good health and wide awake. These early estimates have proved to be remarkably accurate according to a review by Richard Bentall.

Myers' studies and surveys demonstrated that hallucinations are not always purely subjective in origin, but that some are veridical; that is, they involve seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing some event happening at a physically remote location. For example, many of the experiences reported to Gurney and Myers involved seeing apparitions of someone who was experiencing some kind of crisis (usually death) at about the same time. According to Myers scholar Emily Kelly, although no recent study of veridical hallucinations has approached the scope or thoroughness of Myers' and Gurney's investigations, such experiences have continued to be reported. An on-going study at the University of Virginia has identified more than 200 cases of dreams or telepathic impressions occurring to a person at a distance, usually at the time of someone's death.

Telepathy as a Spirit Law

As a direct consequence of discoveries from his and the experiments of others, Myers came to believe that, in addition to the known laws of the physical universe, there are laws that govern the spiritual nature of man. He further concluded that the first law of the spirit world is the law of thought-transference, or "telepathy".

Myers' recognition of what he called "the law of telepathy" has, arguably, had far reaching significance in modern research into the nature of consciousness. (See the previous chapter on the work of Leonid Vasiliev and chapter Ten in this volume).

The law of telepathy is fundamental in SRT practice, as it enables the SRT practitioner to communicate with a patient at a subliminal level of consciousness and with those spirit entities that are influencing him. Telepathy is hypothetically one means by which a spiritualist medium interacts with those spirit entities that provide information.

Classification of Telepathic Phenomena

Myers' concept of the continuum of all psychic phenomena is applied in his early work, *Phantasms of the Living,* with Edmund Gurney and Frank Podmore*,* first published in 1886. In his introduction to their work, Myers writes:

> *Thought* must here be taken as including more than it does in ordinary usage; it must include sensations and volitions as well as mere representations or ideas. This being understood, the name serves its purpose fairly well, as long as we are on experimental ground. It will not be forgotten, however, that our aim is to connect an experimental with a spontaneous class of cases; and according to that view it will often be convenient to describe the former no less than the latter as *telepathic*. We thus get what we need, a single generic term which embraces the whole range of phenomena and brings out their continuity – the simpler experimental forms being the first step in a graduated series.

The first series of experiments by Myers and Gurney in *thought-transference* were based on the observations of the early mesmerists who theorised that there must be some kind of "rapport" between the magnetiser and the patient.

The Community of Sensation Hypothesis

In the series of experiments to test the "community of sensation" hypothesis, there were two percipients, and a considerable group of agents, each of whom, when alone with one or other of the percipients, was successful in transferring his thought impression to a percipient. In the earlier experiments the ideas (thoughts) transferred were of colours, geometric shapes, cards and visible objects of all kinds, which the percipient was asked to name. In some of the experiments the perception of motion was tested, and it was found that the movement of objects could also be discerned by percipients. In 1883 the reproduction of diagrams was introduced to the experiments and about 150 trials were conducted. The results showed that the hypothesis of chance or guesswork was out of the question, but that some sensory impression of the original must have been presented to the mind of the person who reproduced the diagram. [13]

Since these early experiments, hundreds of trials have been conducted in similar studies and in psi experiments, and in a comprehensive review, Dean Radin, Senior-Scientist at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, concludes that:

> ... results reported by individual laboratories have produced strikingly successful results. But however good these experiments may be, they tend not to be convincing to other scientists.

Some of the most fascinating (and convincing) experiments conducted by Myers and Gurney in thought-transference involved the transmission of taste and touch sensations from one person to another.

Sensory Transmission of Taste

In the taste sensation experiments, the taste to be discerned was known only to the experimenters, and the sensations experienced were verbally described by the subjects (not written down), so that all danger of involuntary muscular guidance by the experimenter was eliminated. Gurney describes in great detail the nature of the experiment and the precautions taken in order to avoid any risk of fraud or collusion between agent and percipient. Below are extracts from his precautions published in *Phantasms of the Living*:

A selection of about twenty strongly tasting substances was made. These substances were enclosed in small bottles and small parcels, precisely similar to one another, and kept carefully out of the range of vision of the subjects who were moreover blindfolded, so that no grimaces made by the tasters could be seen. The subjects had in fact no means whatever of knowing, through the sense of sight, what was the substance tasted.

Smell had to be guarded against with greater care. When the substance was odoriferous the packet or bottle was opened outside the room, or at such a distance, and so cautiously as to prevent any sensible smell from escaping. The experiments moreover were conducted in the close vicinity of a very large kitchen, from whence a strong odour of beefsteak and onions proceeded during almost all the time occupied. The tasters took pains to keep their heads high above the subjects and to avoid breathing with open mouth. One substance (coffee) tried was found to give off a slight smell, in spite of all precautions, and an experiment made with this had to be omitted.

I have constructed a table, shown below, from the data presented by Myers to show the relationship between what the agent tasted and what the percipient perceived. I have added a column to my table to accommodate an operational variable to signify a degree of accuracy of the sense impression. I have used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing a null accuracy and 5 representing 100% accuracy.

Table 8-1 Telepathic Taste Transfer

	Taster	Percipient	Substance	Answer Given	Accuracy
1	M	E	Vinegar	A sharp and nasty taste	4
2	M	E	Mustard	Mustard	5
3	M	R	Mustard	Ammonia	3
4	M	E	Sugar	I still taste the hot taste of the mustard	1
5	E.G. & M	E	Worcestershire sauce	Worcestershire sauce	5
6	M. G.	E	Worcestershire sauce	Vinegar	4
7	E.G. & M	E	Port wine	Between eau de Cologne and beer	4

8	M.G.	R	Port wine	Raspberry vinegar	3
9	E.G. & M	E	Bitter aloes	Horrible and bitter	5
10	M.G.	R	Alum	A taste of ink, of iron, of vinegar. I feel it on my lips, it is as if I have been eating alum	5
11	M.G.	E	Alum	E perceived that M.G. was not tasting bitter aloes, as E.G. and M. supposed, but something different. No distinct perception on account of the persistence of the bitter taste.	3
12	E.G. & M.	E	Nutmeg	Peppermint – no – what you put in puddings – nutmeg.	5
13	M.G.	R	Nutmeg	Nutmeg	5
14	E.G. & M.	E	Sugar	Nothing perceived	1

15	M.G.	R	Sugar	Nothing perceived. (Sugar should be tried at an earlier stage in the series, as after the aloes, we could hardly taste the sugar ourselves).	1
16	M.G. & M.	E	Cayenne pepper	Mustard	3
17	M.G.	R	Cayenne pepper	Cayenne pepper. After the cayenne we were unable to taste anything further that evening.	5
18	E.G. & M.	E	Carbonate of soda	Nothing perceived	1
19	M.G.	R	Caraway seeds	It feels like meal – like a seed loaf – caraway seeds. (The substance of the seeds seemed to be perceived before their taste).	5
20	E.G. & M.	E	Cloves	Cloves	5
21	E.G. & M.	E	Citric acid	Nothing perceived	1
22	M.G.	E	Citric acid	Salt	2
23	E.G. & M.	E	Liquorice	Cloves	3
24	M.G.	R	Cloves	Cinnamon	3
25	E.G. & M.	E	Acid jujube	Pear drop	5
26	M.G.	R	Acid jujube	Something hard, which is giving way – acid jujube.	5
27	E.G. & M.	E	Candied ginger	Something sweet and hot	4
28	M.G.	R	Candied ginger	Almond toffee. (M.G. took his ginger in the dark and it	5

				was some time before he realised it was ginger.	
				Total accuracy score	101

A 100% success rate in the above series of experiments would have produced a total score of 140 points. A score of 70 is 50%, which might reasonably be expected from guessing, if the range of possible flavours were known in advance. But this was not the case, and participants had no idea of what flavours to expect. A score of 28 would suggest a total failure for the experiment. The score of 101 indicates a 72% success rate.

Gurney comments on the accuracy of what may appear to be mistakes in some percipient's interpretation of their taste sensation:

> ..it will perhaps be thought that even some of their mistakes are not much wider of the mark than they might have been had a trace of the substance been actually placed upon their tongue.

Another factor that ought to be considered is the effect that a preceding strong bitter taste would have had on the inability of percipients to taste sugar which followed. Discounting the sugar results would have reduced the total to 98 divided be 3 less items, giving a success rate of 78.4 %.

Classification Typology of Sensory Impressions

Gurney and Podmore gave classifications to the types of sensory impression that influenced a percipient:

A. Class (a) is where the impression is sensory and externalised, and where the perception of the person seems to see, hear, or feel that which he instinctively refers to the outer world. The above cited experiments on the transmission of taste sensation would fall into this class.
B. Class (b) is where the impression is not sensory or externalised. The impression is of an inward or ideal kind – either a mental image or an emotion, or a blind impulse towards some sort of action. This class of impression is relevant to cases of compulsion and obsession which I shall deal with in more detail in the next chapter on motor automatisms.

C. Class (c) is where the perception is sensory without externalisation. For example; a physical feeling of illness when there is sympathetic resonance or physical rapport between a healer and his sick patient, which I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 10. Other types of impression that Gurney and Podmore classify include:
D. Class (d) dreams.
E. Class (e) in the hypnogogic state between sleep and waking.
F. Class (f) where the impression is reciprocal and each of two persons exercise a telepathic influence on each other.
G. Class (g) are collective cases where more than two people experience the same telepathic incident as in the case of Peck's exorcism of "Beccah" that I introduced in Chapter Three.

There is another class of telepathic communication where the percipient is not influenced or affected in any way, but where the agent projects a part of his consciousness to "see" the percipient. I cite examples of this type because they are relevant to SRT practice when the practitioner needs to be aware of the spiritual health of the patient whilst in the patient's absence. In SRT practice this type of one-way interaction (often called "scanning") is useful if there is suspected resistance on the part of the conscious awareness of the patient, or if an attached entity is avoiding detection.

Where the above experiments on taste sensation were conducted with the knowledge and agreement between all participants, the experiments that I cite below were conducted without the knowledge or agreed participation of the recipient.

Intended Astral Projection

To illustrate the principle of astral projection, the case cited below is taken from an edited version of Myers' *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* where he reports that the experiment succeeded on the first trial. The agent was Miss "Edith Maughan" (who later became Mrs. G. Rayleigh Vicars) and the account is taken from the *SPR Proceedings*.

> One night in September 1888 I was lying awake in bed reading. I had recently been studying with interest various cases of astral projection in Phantasms of the Living, and I distinctly remember making up my mind that night to try whether I could manage to accomplish a projection of myself by force of will-concentration.

The room next to mine was occupied by a friend of mine [Miss Ethel Thompson], who was an old acquaintance, and not at all of an excitable turn of mind. I perfectly recall lying back on my pillow with a resolute but half-doubtful and amused determination to make Miss Thompson see me. The candle was burning on a chair at the side of my bed, and I heard only the ticking of a clock as I "willed" with all my might to appear to her. After a few minutes I felt dizzy and only half-conscious.

I don't know how long this state may have lasted, but I do remember emerging into a conscious state and thinking I had better leave off, as the strain had exhausted me.

I gave up and changed into an easy position, thinking I had failed and needlessly fatigued myself for an impossible fancy. I blew out my candle; at the instant I was startled by hearing an indistinct sound from the next room.

It was Miss Thompson's voice raised slightly, but I could not distinguish more than the actual sound, which was repeated, and then there was silence. Soon after, my clock struck two a.m., and I fell asleep.

Next morning I noticed that Miss Thompson looked rather tired at breakfast, but I asked no questions. Presently she said, "Had I gone into her room to frighten her during the night?" I said I had not left my room. She declared that I seemed to her to come in and bend over her and disappeared immediately thereafter. From what she said I concluded it must have been between one and two a.m. Her own account is in the possession of the Psychical Society. All I have to add is that I was in my ordinary state of health, and not at all excited, but merely bent on trying an experiment.

The second example was first reported in the *SPR Journal*, (vol. Vii. P. 99). This case is especially interesting in terms of being *reciprocal* as well as *experimental*. The main objective of the agent was to discover something of the recipient's condition, and the intention to manifest an apparition of his self was only secondary.

On the 5th July, 1887, I left my home in Lakewood to go to New York to spend a few days. My wife was not feeling well when I left, and after I had started I looked back and saw her standing in the door looking disconsolate and sad at my leaving. The picture haunted me all day, and at night, before I went to bed, I thought I would try to find out if possible her condition. I had undressed, and was sitting on the edge of the bed, when I covered my face with my hands and willed myself in Lakewood at home to see if I could see her. After a little, I seemed to be standing in her room before the bed, and saw her lying there looking much better. I felt satisfied she was better, and so spent the week more comfortably regarding her condition. On Saturday I went home. When she saw me she remarked, "I

> don't know whether I am glad to see you or not, for I thought something had happened to you. I saw you standing in front of the bed the night (about 8:30 or before 9) you left, as plain as could be, and I have been worrying myself about you ever since. I sent to the office and to the depot daily to get some message from you." After explaining my effort to find out her condition, everything became plain to her. She had seen me when I was trying to see her and find out her condition. I thought at the time I was going to see her and make her see me.

These early experiments show what appears to be the extraordinary ability of one person to *access* another from a distance, and this is precisely what SRT practitioners do when helping those patients or clients who may be troubled by spirit entities. In their search for explanations for the presentation of how a phantasm can present itself to another person, and how that person (the percipient) can perceive it, Myers, Gurney and Podmore demonstrated that these are not extraordinary abilities at all, but something that ordinary people are capable of.

It was Myers' and Gurney's intention to understand the psychological mechanisms that enabled persons and spirits to communicate with each other. However, before that considerable task could be attempted they first needed to verify that the visual manifestation of an apparition was due to a verifiable external source. In experiments such as those cited above, the originator of the automatism is known, and it can be ascertained that the will and intention (volition) of the agent was the causative factor. The experiments served their purpose in showing that the concentrated intention of a person can influence the sensations of another, even to the extent that they could present a vision of themselves, or what Myers and Gurney called a "phantasm". But what Myers and Gurney needed to prove was whether an external influence, such as a discarnate consciousness of a deceased person could achieve the same result. They needed a rigorous methodology to determine the veridical authenticity of the existence of a discarnate entity, or what they called "Phantasms of the Dead".

Where *telepathy* is the transmission of thoughts from one person to another through channels other than the recognised channels of the senses, *Phantasms of the Living* includes cases which seem at first sight to involve more than mere transference of thought. The use of the term "Phantasms of the Living" by Gurney, Myers and Podmore, actually alludes to what we

would normally call “visual hallucinations” or what would more accurately be described as “apparitions”.

In Gurney’s and Myers’ studies they addressed two important issues. First, the reliability of the evidence, and second whether the hallucination and the crisis could have occurred simultaneously by chance. Using statistical analysis they concluded that these incidents occurred too frequently to be attributed to chance. On the first issue of reliability of evidence, Myers identified three possible criteria:

> There remain three conditions which might establish a presumption that an apparition or other immediate manifestation of a dead person is something more than a mere subjective hallucination of the percipient’s senses. Either (1) more persons than one might be independently affected by the phenomenon; or (2) the phantasm might convey information, afterwards discovered to be true, of something which the percipient himself had never known; or (3) the appearance might be that of a person whom the percipient himself had never seen, and of whose aspect he was ignorant, and yet his description of it might be sufficiently definite for identification.

Myers believed that it is necessary to examine both sides of a case, that of the receiver (percipient) and that of the sender (agent) of information, including the state of consciousness of each and the emotional relationship between them. Myers particularly warned against the error of attributing too much importance to the person who sees the phantom, given that this person’s account is the only one we can access in cases where the agent is deceased. However, in cases where both percipient and agent are still living, we have the opportunity to examine evidence from both perspectives, as evidenced in the examples above.

Hallucinations in Relation to Time and Space

Telepathic communication challenges those laws of physics pertaining to time and space, and one of Myers concerns was that his theoretical concepts - rather than contravene the known laws of physics - contributed to a broader naturalism. The spatial concept was therefore important to him.

The spatial concept arose in Chapter Three when I introduced the eye-witness testimony of Peck and his colleagues in the case of the exorcism of “Beccah”. I drew our attention to the reliability of eye-witness testimony when it appears that more than one person experience the same visual

anomaly. Now we are in a position to see that, for Myers, it is because collective cases suggest some kind of objective stimulus for the hallucination that they raise the perplexing problem of the relationship between psychic phenomena and their location in three-dimensional space.

In his early theorising on the phenomenon of apparitions appearing to more than one person, Myers proposed that subliminal elements of one person's mind may be drawn to a particular place, perhaps by some kind of psychic "rapport" with one or more persons there. These subliminal elements, in some unknown way, modify an actual point in space, but not in a material way that is perceptible to the senses. His hypothesis was a *spatial* one without being a sensory one. Myers was attempting to find a more satisfactory theory than that which suggests apparitions are some kind of "ghost" that multiple persons will see. Alternatively, Gurney hypothesised that apparitions are hallucinations produced by a telepathic impression, with collective cases involving further telepathic transfer of the impression from the primary percipient to others in close proximity. According to Emily Kelly there is still no consensus on this theoretically important phenomenon.

Myers later developed his theory on the relationship between psychic events and space as a result of the evidence that his experiments with trance states uncovered. He believed that trance can be developed in two directions. It may involve a possession, by either a part of the automatist's own subliminal mind, or the mind of another person, living or deceased; and it may involve some sort of excursion out of one's own body into a larger environment, which could in some cases lead to an experience of "ecstasy". Although Myers used such spatial terms as "enter" and "go out", "inside" and "outside" he emphasised that the unknown processes behind these phenomena, and others such as clairvoyance, "need not be spatial". Myers' theory that the mind (or a part of it) can dissociate from the body and go off on "non-spatial" excursions supports the theory of soul-loss and shamanic journeying into alternate realities, as well as mystical experience. All of these phenomena, on account of the simple observation that they all contravene the known limitations of time and space, lend support for the hypothesis that the limiting boundaries of time and space are not the only reality, and explanations for such phenomena lead scientific research beyond our known four-dimensional space-time continuum.

Myers' term *sensory automatism* encapsulates *all* varieties of hallucination and veridical sensory experience without any discernible sensory input, and it was his intention to distinguish the difference between autogenic and veridical sensory automatisms by use of his experiments and his three validation criteria.

Gurney's classification of telepathic phenomena, when integrated into Myers' expanded naturalism provide a conceptual framework that acknowledges the ability of the human sensory apparatus within the central nervous system to receive and process visual and auditory information from external sources without the use of the ears, eyes or taste buds. All this strongly suggests that the brain, with its complex apparatus for processing information received from sensory organs and its ability to create images and impressions without sensory input, is also a receptor device for receiving information that is not received through the recognised sensory organs. These findings have monumental implications for psychology, as William James remarked whenever he made references to the work of Myers.

Conventional medicine does not recognise telepathy as a psychological phenomenon and neither does it recognise astral projection. It is therefore unable to accommodate mind-to-mind communication as a cause of mental or emotional distress and neither can it use mind-to-mind communication as a remedy. Conventional medicine is therefore restricted, and consequently not able either to diagnose or to treat spirit possession. However, if medical science were able to expand its conceptual framework in order to recognise spirit possession phenomena as a reality of human experience and treat it accordingly, then SRT principles and therapeutic techniques could be taught to medical students.

Chapter Nine

Motor Automatisms and the Mind-Body Connection

*"*Motor automatisms*"* are those impulses and actions that occur automatically without the conscious will (volition) of the subject. They can include physiological processes, such as changes in the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and endocrine system, and they also include physical actions and behaviours, such as compulsions to act in non-characteristic ways. The varied phenomena of motor automatisms represent invitations to investigate the mind-body problem, and by so doing, to follow a continuum from those theoretical concepts that are acceptable to modern medical science, through to those that are of interest to the parapsychology researcher and eventually to possible solutions discovered through modern clinical hypnosis and high energy quantum physics.

Spontaneous Inhibition and Compulsion

It was Myers' opinion that some automatic responses in humans are possibly the results of possession by discarnate entities, and are therefore highly significant phenomena to observe. For Myers, the primary question to be answered was whether the impulse to act originates within the automatist's own mind, "or in some mind external to him?"

Myers gives examples of sudden unaccountable desires to be somewhere else with no accountable reason other than a "dread or fear", of something terrible happening and "sudden arrests or incapacities of action".

One such example, published in SPR *Proceedings* (vol. Ix. P. 33) is a case cited by Myers that illustrates the effect of the conscious desire of the agent, "Elizabeth", on the percipient "Mrs Hadselle" of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to attend to her as her own sister lay dying. Mrs Hadselle had boarded a train and was about to commence her journey when she had an inexplicable impulse to get off the train and change her ticket for a

different destination, without knowing why, to where her friend Elizabeth lived. She arrived at her friend Elizabeth's house just one hour before Elizabeth's sister died. She was therefore there to comfort her friend in her grief.

The central hypothesis to be tested in such cases is whether the impulse, or obsession, originates in the subject's own mind, from the wishes, desires or intentions of another human being, as illustrated in the above case of Mrs Hadselle and Elizabeth, or from a discarnate spirit entity. This is relevant to the wider debate insofar as the SRT practitioner needs to know the source of the stimulus in order to be able to discern whether a person is being influenced by an external entity or whether the person's own intuition or precognitive abilities are at work.

One of the most effective ways for Myers to test the hypothesis was to examine the validity of messages conveyed through the medium of automatic writing.

Automatic Writing

Myers was clear about his objectives whilst he investigated the varied phenomena of automatisms:

> Our main theme, I repeat once more, is the analysis of human personality, undertaken with the object of showing that in its depths there lie hidden indications of life and faculty not limited to a planetary existence, or to this material world.

With particular reference to "possession" Myers emphasises the importance of automatic writing by saying:

> I may say at once that some of the automatic movements with which we shall have to deal – certain utterances and writings given in a state of "possession" – must rank, in my view, among the most important phenomena yet discovered by man.

The above statement by Myers, despite its huge importance in the study of human consciousness and personality, is still being ignored by mainstream psychology. Contrary to being seen as rare and unusual, Myers draws his readers' attention to the possibility that they may have personal experience of witnessing the phenomenon of automatic writing or spirit drawing themselves. This implies that it is a common event in the lives of many

people in their private lives and thereby reinforces its importance for mainstream psychology:

> Some of my readers may have seen so-called "spirit-drawings," designs, sometimes in colour, whose author asserts that he drew them without any plan, or even knowledge of what his hand was going to do.

Myers cites an example of automatic drawing with a family who had suffered the loss of a son aged eleven. The account was recorded in *Spirit Drawings: A personal narrative*, by W.M. Wilkinson, 2nd ed:

> The deceased boy's brother, aged twelve, sat down to draw a picture when he suddenly found his hand filling with a feeling unknown to him and began to move without his volition on the paper to form letters, words and sentences. The feeling was not unpleasant and he became aware of a power that was unknown to him that moved his hand. The handwriting was not his own and the subject matter of the writing was unknown to him. This experience occurred quite often and the hand sometimes drew pictures of strange flowers as well as writing. After a few weeks, the boy's mother began to experience the same thing. She had never learned to draw, but found herself producing a large series of drawings of flowers, geometric forms and various objects that the family interpreted as symbolic. The drawings later developed into architectural sketches and landscapes and the mother developed an ability to paint as well as draw automatically. Her husband also developed the ability to draw and write automatically.

Myers investigated the phenomenon of automatic writing by the observation of somnambulists who were purported to convey messages from spirits, either by holding a paper and pencil or by use of the *planchette*, which is a device similar to the Ouija board where the "control" (that is the controlling spirit influence) spells out the message. The primary question to be asked about automatic writing is regarding its *source* and whether it originates in the subliminal mind of the writer or an external source such as a discarnate entity. The same question can be raised with any other physical forms of divination such as the pendulum, divining rods or the Ouija.

When the possibility of fraud has been eliminated, Myers suggested four possible sources of automatic writing or drawing; (a) from the writer's own subliminal mind (b) by telepathy from another person still living (c) from

some disembodied intelligence of unknown type. Under this heading Myers included the possibility of: “elementaries, or even devils, and on the other hand to guides or guardians of superhuman goodness and wisdom”. Myers’ final category (d) is the possibility that the message could be from the mind of a departed friend or family member who gives claim to their actual identity. In other words – the identity of the spirit is who they say they are.

Most sceptical commentators would agree that once deliberate fraud has been discounted, the subliminal mind is at work. On this most important point Myers comments on an experiment where the subliminal volition and physical dexterity of the medium were put to the test:

> An interesting experiment was tried, of writing with two planchettes, “F” having one in each hand. I suggested this in order to elucidate the connection between left-handed writing and “mirror-writing,” and fully expected that the two hands would write the same communications. To my astonishment, however, the communications, though written simultaneously, were different and proceeded from different “spirits”.

Myers concluded that each hand was being controlled by a different spirit, considering that for a person to be able to manipulate two planchettes independently of each other and write two completely different messages would take a great deal of practice.

External validation of automatic writing, according to Myers, must lay in the *content* of the messages received and whether or not the automatist could have had prior knowledge of the content. If the information received could not possibly be known before hand by the automatist, and could also be verified by additional external means then it was perceived as possible evidence of information from an external source. Clearly the content and meaning of the messages are the essential criteria in formulating a hypothesis on their origin. Further evidence can be seen in the differences between the intellectual capacity of the writer and the complexity of the messages written.

Automatic writing can be either a form of positive possession or negative possession. Myers cites a case of negative possession sent to him by a medical doctor in Europe of a patent who came to him in the first instance with a sprained foot which spread to other parts of her lower limbs and body. The patient was persuaded to submit to a spiritualist healing session by a group of her friends. A spirit introduced himself as Dr Z and

offered a diagnosis and treatment. From then on the patient experienced several physical phenomena associated with Dr Z, including spontaneous movements of her hands and body and automatic writing. Disliking these intrusive phenomena, the patient worked hard to free herself from the control of Dr Z by placing her hands in cold water and with the help of a hypnotiser with "passes of disengagement".

Automatic (or passive) writing had emerged as a topic of interest in the English-speaking world with the writings of Andrew Davis Jackson (1826-1910) an apprentice shoemaker in Poughkeepsie, New York. Jackson became popularly known as the "Poughkeepsie Seer".

Jackson, having been mesmerised by a Bridgeport physician, over a period of fifteen months, commencing in 1845, succeeded in writing an 800 page epic, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*. In contrast with Jackson's primitive level of education, *The Principles* offered a mystic-scientific account of creation, a critical analysis of the *Old Testament* and a revised formula for a new system of socialism. The simple fact that the uneducated Jackson was able to pen such a complex scientific and philosophical epic, with information that was completely unknown to him, provides compelling evidence of a superior intelligence that was external to himself.

Interest in spiritualism and passive writing had crossed the Atlantic to become fashionable in England, but to the dismay of Myers and other members of the Society for Psychical Research, Spiritualism and its séances had reached the level of "a plaything for drawing-room amusement". But the automatic writings of Reverend Stainton Moses were, according to Myers, "perhaps the first continuous series of messages given in England which lifted the subject to a higher plane".

Stainton Moses was a teacher of English at University College London and emerged as one of the most significant practitioners of the emergent religion of Spiritualism in the nineteenth century.

Born in Lincolnshire in 1852, Moses suffered the first of a series of mental breakdowns whilst studying at Exeter College, Oxford. He travelled to St. Petersburg and after spending several months recovering from his "brain fever" in the Byzantine monasteries of Mount Athos, he returned to Oxford for his finals and was ordained into the Anglican Church by Bishop Wilberforce in 1863. Moses was curate at Kirk Maughold on the Isle of Man, but after ten years and a decline in his acceptance of the narrow

dogmas of the Anglican Church, together with deteriorating health, he returned to London where he was introduced to Spiritualism by reading *The Debatable Land* by the social reformer Robert Owen.

In the home of his friend, Mrs. Speers, in St. John's Wood, Moses began to experience signs of mediumship himself. He saw strange lights moving up from the floor, smelled heavily perfumed breezes in the séance room, and on one occasion he returned to his locked room to find his clothes neatly arranged in the shape of a cross. In 1872 Moses received his first written message from spirit whilst fully conscious:

> At first the writing was very small and irregular, and it was necessary for me to write slowly and cautiously and to watch the hand, following the lines with my eye, otherwise the message soon became incoherent, and the result was mere scribble.
>
> In a short time, however, I found that I could dispense with these precautions. The writing, while becoming more and more minute, became at the same time very regular and beautifully formed …. The answers to my questions (written at the top of the page) were paragraphed, and arranged as if for press: and the name of God was always written in capitals, and slowly, and, as it seemed, reverentially.

Myers and Gurney were both suitably impressed by Moses who influenced their desire to work at the subject in as many ways as they could. Moses was therefore a significant inspiration to Myers and Gurney in their experiments on different stages of hypnotic trance and those experiments with Pierre Janet where it was demonstrated that alter-personalities can be artificially and temporarily created.

What was of prime importance to Myers was the fact that secondary personalities could be artificially created by hypnotic suggestion that had the ability to write down material that was quite unknown and alien to the core personality. When these writings were shown to the core personality, he would repudiate them absolutely and maintain that he not only had no recollection of writing them down, but they alluded to facts that he was completely unaware of.

Thus it was that Myers asserted that automatic writing could be produced by sub-personalities within the subliminal reaches of the automatist's own mind, and that these sub personalities could be either genuine dissociated parts or artificially created by hypnotic suggestion. The

big question that remains is; “Who writes and how can we tell the difference?” Myers goes on to say:

> During these twenty-seven years I have personally observed at least fifty cases where there was every reason to suppose that the writing was genuinely automatic; albeit in most cases it was uninteresting and non-evidential.

This observation of Myers on the artificial creation of sub-personalities is the one that modern scholars focus their attention on, and the principle may be used with hypnotherapy for uncovering hidden sub-personalities. However, modern researchers persist in ignoring the possibility that discarnate entities could be authors of automatic writing.

The topic of written evidence of a spirit world is worthy of further special attention due to its significant contribution to the science of spirit possession. It is therefore addressed more fully in a subsequent chapter where it is studied in relation to brain imaging and other scientific data. In the meantime, I shall elucidate further on the mysterious interaction between mind and body, or what modern science addresses as the “mind-body problem”.

The Problem of Mind over Body

The consensus of nearly all contemporary scientists and philosophers is that all aspects of mind and consciousness are the products of an evolving nervous system. This widespread presumption is based on the observations, both scientific and every-day, that the evolution of mind is correlated with the evolution of the nervous system and that changes in/or damage to the brain result in changes or even dissolution of consciousness.

It is easy to forget, however, that correlation does not mean causation. The assumption that the correlation implies a unilateral dependence of consciousness on the brain has been exacerbated and entrenched because observations of the mind-brain relationship have been limited primarily to situations in which a change on the side of the brain is the independent variable, and changes on the side of behaviour is the dependent variable.

What happens when we expand our observations to phenomena in which a change in mental state clearly seems to be the initiating cause, and a change in physiological or physical state is the result? In brief, relevant to a problem that has long been neglected by psychology, is the problem of

volition or the exercise of the *will* over the body. To put it another way – what power does the mind have over the body? And more to the point with particular focus on the influence of discarnate spirit entities: "What power does one mind have over another's body?"

Frederic Myers identified a wide variety of phenomena that had to be addressed because they challenged the prevailing scientific model. Some of these phenomena that were resisted or denied by nineteenth-century scientists, because they resisted a ready physiological explanation, are now being more fully explored by mainstream scientific and medical thinking. This has happened because these phenomena continue to be observed, and because scientists have been able to identify neurobiological processes that seem to bring them within the framework of the prevailing physiological model. But the question remains - how complete is this physiological model? How does it explain the enormous variety of phenomena where a mental state has triggered a physiological reaction? Moreover, many phenomena identified by Myers remain outside of mainstream scientific and medical thinking, and are still ignored, derided or denied even though they continue to be observed, and in some instances have continued to increase in number and quality.

There is an extraordinarily wide range of documented phenomena of psychophysiological influence which seems to originate in, or to depend upon a person's beliefs or expectations however those beliefs or expectations happen to be generated. In addition to these expectation or belief driven phenomena, the more unusual or extreme they may be - so the more they challenge conventional physiological models.

The first group of documented phenomena that appear to be belief or expectation driven, and challenge the physiological model of causality, are those phenomena that may be classified under the labels of faith healing, spiritual healing and Christian Science mind-cure. These cures can all be grouped together with "miracle cures" such as those experienced by pilgrims to sacred sites such as Lourdes, and such cures could all be explained away as placebo. But paradoxically, placebo, which is a "fix-all" explanation for anything that cannot be explained by medical science, is in fact an example of the power of the mind (in the form of belief, suggestion or expectation) over the body. This is far from satisfactory because "placebo" cannot be explained in terms other than the *influence of the mind*

over the body. The sceptics cannot have it all their own way. Placebo is the power of the mind over the body or it is not.

In this chapter I shall be addressing the scientific research that challenges the religious belief or "faith" driven hypothesis. The science of *psychoneuroimmunology* (PNI) is becoming increasingly accepted by mainstream science, and now provides a solid foundation for the notion that the mind *does* affect the body.

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)

Lipowsky in 1986 described modern psychosomatic medicine as emerging in the early decades of the twentieth century as a reaction against biological reductionism in medicine. Psychosomatic medicine focussed around two concepts: firstly "psychogenesis" the notion that some psychological factors can cause and influence physical disease and "holism" the notion that mind and body are an indivisible unity.

Resistance to the idea that mental factors can influence physical states has primarily been rooted in the lack of any theory to explain the interaction, but the most important impetus to the re-admittance of the idea that mental factors influence the body has come from the developing field of "Psychoneuroimmunology" (PNI) which has its roots in the work of Walter Cannon and Hans Selye who found that the body maintains its proper state of functioning through a processes called "homeostasis" (maintaining balance). According to Moseby's Medical Dictionary, homeostasis is:

> A relative constancy in the internal environment of the body, naturally maintained by adaptive responses that promote healthy survival. Various sensing, feedback and control mechanisms function to effect this steady state. Some of the key control mechanisms are the reticular formation in the brainstem and the endocrine glands. Some of the functions controlled by homeostatic mechanisms are the heartbeat, haematopoiesis, blood pressure, body temperature, electrolytic balance, respiration and glandular secretion.

In homeostasis, stress is an important factor in upsetting the normal balance, because by reflecting the body's reaction to environmental changes, it has widespread biochemical and neurophysiological effects.

The scientific literature on PNI is vast, and even the greatest sceptic must now acknowledge that a wealth of evidence exists to prove in the most

scientific terms that the functions of the mind *do* influence the health of the body. Thus Sternberg acknowledges the importance of this mind-body connection:

> By understanding these mind-body connections in modern terms, in the language of molecules and nerve pathways, electrical impulses and hormonal responses, scientists can finally accept that such effects are real .

Unfortunately there comes a point where known PNI connections cannot provide an adequate explanation, and that point is reached with the physical manifestation of wounds without any obvious physical cause.

Stigmata

Moving along the continuum of psychophysiological phenomena from PNI, and among the most well-known and hotly debated phenomena of psychophysiological influence, are cases of *stigmata*, in which a person develops marks and even bleeding corresponding to the sites of the wounds that Christ is thought to have suffered at his crucifixion. Hundreds of cases have been reported from the thirteenth century right up to the present time. Most of the reported cases, but not all, have occurred in young, single females, usually Catholic and highly religious. The marks are usually on the hands and the soles of the feet, corresponding to the sites where nails were thought to have pinned Christ to the cross. Another common site is the side of the body corresponding to a spear wound. They frequently appear when the stigmatic is in some kind of altered state or trance. However severe the nature of the wounds and bleeding appear to be, no sepsis or inflammation occurs and the wounds rapidly disappear, leaving little or no marks until the next recurrence.

Myers suggested that people usually react to reports of stigmata with one of two polarised views: either as fraud or miracle. Although fraudulent cases have been reported, many others have been studied, and have shown symptoms of hysteria, causing the dichotomy of opinion to shift to pathology or miracle. For many years hysteria was held to be the explanation for stigmata. In recent years, however, scientists have looked to psychophysiology for explanations, particularly in the wake of our increasing awareness of the relationship between emotions and the immune system.

Certain psychological characteristics seem conducive as precursors to stigmata, including symptoms of hysteria. But the essential factor does not seem to be pathology per se, but rather a trait that may manifest as suggestibility, absorption or intense concentration, a capacity for vivid imagery, hypnotisability or dissociation. It has been observed that stigmata often occur when the person is in some kind of altered state of consciousness, such as religious ecstasy or trance.

Another important factor is the intense emotion accompanying stigmata. The fundamental question that remains unanswered for science is, "How can emotional experience activate specific psychophysiological mechanisms?"

Myers attempted to go beyond the usual polarised positions of pathology or miracle and find a more comprehensive explanation, and he examined experimental evidence to find a solution to the dichotomous explanations. His conclusion was that, like many other anomalous phenomena that remained unexplained by nineteenth-century science, stigmata fell into the same continuum that could be explained by experimentation with hypnosis:

> This phenomenon [stigmata], which was long treated by both savants and devotees as though it must be either fraudulent or miraculous, is now found (like a good many other phenomena previously deemed subject to that dilemma) to enter readily within the widening circuit of natural law.

Experiments with Stigmata

Experiments with stigmata involve the *intention* of the experimenter to inflict physical phenomena onto the subject using the power of direct suggestion, but avoiding any prior expectation of the nature of the experiment on the part of the subject. Myers writes:

> The delicate responsiveness of the vasomotor system has given rise to some curious spontaneous phenomena in the form of stigmatisation, and has suggested some experiments, which are probably as yet in their infancy. The main point of interest is at this point spontaneous self-suggestion, and subsequently suggestion from without, having made a kind of first attempt at the modification of the human organism in what may be called "fancy directions".

In Myers' view stigmatisation is a form of suggested "vesication" (a form of blisters), with the quasi-burns and real blisters which obediently appear in any place or pattern that is ordered by a direct suggestion. Three cases of the production of cruciform marks by hypnosis reported by Dr H.M. Biggs of Lima appeared in the *SPR Journal*, vol 3, and Myers cites one of them below. This case is important because it is representative of a method whereby the hypnotist did not give the subject any indication of his specific intention prior to hypnotising her, using the Mesmeric method of magnetic passes:

> Without her knowing what I intended to do, I tried magnetism; she fell into a deep magnetic sleep within minutes. You will have a red cross appear on your chest, only on every Friday. ... In my vest pocket I had a cross of rock crystal. I opened the top button of her dress and placed the cross on the upper part of the manubrium, a point she could not see unless by the aid of a looking glass, saying to her, "This is the spot where the cross will appear." ... When Friday came I unbuttoned the top part of her dress, and there, to my complete and utter astonishment, was a pink cross, exactly over the place where I had put the one of crystal. It appeared every Friday and was invisible on all other days.

Having evidence that physiological phenomena that are commensurate with the phenomena of stigmata can be induced in a hypnotised subject by suggestion from a hypnotist offers the possibility that similar phenomena can be imposed onto a subject by another without their knowledge from a distance. Myers used the phenomenon of stigmata in his authoritative case for experimental hypnosis and went on to cite cases of hypnosis at a distance where it was proven that an outside agency that may be unknown to the percipient could be causing the reported phenomena to occur.

For contemporary science, the search for an adequate theoretical model to explain hysterical symptoms has been hampered by the fear of having to return to what it sees to be an outmoded dualism. In order to avoid this problem, modern scientists have called for a reconceptualization of the phenomenon that offers instead a more embracing concept that integrates rather than separates the organic and the psychological. In Emily Kelly's view such holism brings us no closer to a real understanding of psychophysiological phenomena, but leads to such suppositions as; a hysteric's symptoms correspond to his/her own ideas about what his/her own symptoms should look like. According to Kelly, what is needed is a

holism that is dualistic or even pluralistic to the extent that Myers' observations and experiments with motor automatisms can be accommodated into a more complete naturalism.

Myers urges us to pause and consider the evidence that leads us to consider the possibility that discarnate minds can possess the living, and on this he writes:

> The examination of "possession" is no longer to us, as to the ordinary civilized enquirer, a merely antiquarian or anthropological research into forms of superstition lying wholly apart from any valid or systematic thought. On the contrary, it is an inquiry directly growing out of previous evidence; directly needed for the full comprehension of known facts as well as for the discovery of facts unknown. We are now aware that we are obliged to seek for certain definite phenomena in the spiritual world in order to explain certain definite phenomena of the world of matter.

Myers' own scientific investigations into *motor automatisms* led him to conclude that spirit possession is a reality of human experience. It now leaves us to review the evidence for a spirit world under the new microscope of quantum theory and present the case for spirit possession from more recent research in Part III.

Part III:

Myers and Modern Science

Myers' conceptual framework was developed over one hundred years ago at the end of the nineteenth century, and the purpose of this third and final section is to reconcile his framework with modern scientific research in those areas that are relevant to the phenomenon of spirit possession in modern times. I use the term *relevant* because research into spirit possession is not conducted by modern scientists, with the exception of psychiatrists in Brazil. However, it is my contention that all modern research into psi phenomena, esoteric healing practices and the fundamental nature of consciousness are all relevant for the scientific enquiry into the nature of spirit possession. This third Part therefore examines the relationship between the above mentioned concepts with some of the research findings in the field of quantum mechanics.

In Chapter Ten I take a closer look at Myers' investigations into Mesmer's theory of "animal magnetism" and how it relates to his theory of "psychological rapport". This examination is conducted in conjunction with quantum theory, which gives a completely new perspective on what Myers envisaged, thereby bringing his theories into the twenty-first century.

Chapter Eleven examines recent research findings into the concepts of out-of-body (OBE) and near-death experiences (NDE), together with other evidence to support Myers' theory that consciousness survives the death of the body.

Chapter Twelve expands our knowledge of the relationship between the spirit world with further examination of "inspired", "channelled" and "automatic writing" by the application of neuro-imaging techniques, together with validated scientific discoveries received through such writings.

Chapter Thirteen revisits the relationship between mental health and spirit possession in light of new evidence from contemporary scientific

research.

Chapter Ten

F.W.H. Myers and Quantum Theory

Several references have been made in this examination to the phenomenon of "magnetic sleep" and its connection with "silent had passes", which is a method of inducing the magnetic sleep by passing the hands over the subject's face and body without making contact. This was the common method of induction practised by magnetisers until voiced suggestions became the method espoused by Liebeault and Bernheim of the Nancy School.

In this chapter I explore the nature of animal magnetism as a possible form of physical energy in the healing process. The "laying on of hands" is a practice that is mentioned in *The Bible*: "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (Acts 19: 4-6). The laying on of hands is an integral act in the Catholic rite of exorcism and is used by many Anglican clerics in the treatment of their parishioners who present themselves for healing. The laying on of hands is also applied by Spiritists in Brazilian hospitals. It is my contention that these practices are closely connected with the "mesmeric" method of trance induction.

Myers insisted that "mesmerism" had a very important contribution to make to psychology, and he writes:

> The history of the first sporadic attempts at this form of experiment in the early days of mesmerism, ..., must, I think, be regarded as one of the most important chapters in psychology.

It is unfortunate that Myers' sentiment regarding the potential value of Mesmerism has not been followed by subsequent researchers. Both clinical experience and more recent experimental research into hypnosis has shown that some kind of psychological *rapport* is a necessary prerequisite to the successful induction of hypnosis, but the mechanisms of mesmeric passes

and the nature of the force known as “animal magnetism” have been ignored by modern hypnosis researchers. Myers hypothesised that Mesmer’s animal magnetism was not caused by a physical force, as Mesmer believed, but was psychological in nature. I propose that Mesmer was correct in his theory that the influence is physical, but incorrect in the nature of the magnetic force.

Following the observations of the Marquis de Puységur, on the characteristics of magnetic sleep, certain phenomena, which included; thought reading and mental commands, medical and general clairvoyance, precognition, inducing the magnetic trance state from a distance and ecstasy were so commonly reported during the first eighty years of the practice of animal magnetism that they were taken for granted.

Another phenomenon that was accepted without question was the ability of some somnambulists to discern the presence of the magnetic fluid visually. Tardy de Montravel’s cited case of “Mile N” was the first in a long line of somnambulists to claim she could *see* the magnetic fluid, and Joseph Deleuze reported that many could see and sense magnetic emanations. The German experimenter T. J. Meyer noted that the fluid was most often seen radiating from the fingertips and toes of healers.

During the 1830s, John Wilson, a physician at the Middlesex Hospital, undertook research to discover whether animal magnetism was a physical fact. He began with his own patients and found the therapeutic outcomes of magnetism to be beneficial, but he wanted to arrive at a conclusion as to its nature through a method that he thought would provide absolute proof that magnetism was physical and not the result of any expectation of the patient or suggestion from the magnetiser. Wilson conducted a systematic study of the effects of magnetism on a variety of animals including cats, ducks, geese, fish, dogs, chickens, turkeys, horses, macaws, pigs, calves, leopards, elephants and lions.

Wilson’s magnetic passes produced a deep sleep from which the animal could often only be aroused with difficulty. Additional phenomena often included catalepsy, convulsive movements, abnormal activity, or non-typical reactions such as repeated yawning or sweating. Wilson was not the first to conduct experiments on magnetism with animals. The Marquis de Puységur’s brother treated a dog in 1784, and in the same year magnetisers in Lyon treated a horse. Although Wilson’s results were striking, his work

was generally ignored and no one has ever attempted to replicate his experiments.

In their search for answers to the animal magnetism enigma, theorists considered the existence of invisible sources of energy in the environment. The discovery of radiation in the late nineteenth century and the concept of *ether* had led many scientists to postulate a homogeneous, frictionless, non-material substance filling what we perceive as "empty" space and serving as the transmitting medium for light and electromagnetic forces. Although twentieth-century physics abandoned the concept of ether it nonetheless added significant support for the larger idea behind the concept – and the one that was of special interest to Myers.

In parallel with advances in the physical sciences and the discoveries of unseen forces such as electromagnetism, radio waves, microwaves, etc., psychological interest in the unseen physical forces that influence the relationships between human beings has waned, creating a dearth of experimentation in this area that has lasted for more than a hundred years since the experiments with animals by Wilson, and the experiments of Myers under his theories of *motor automatism*s. Thus, human beings are regarded by mainstream science as independent, autonomous and energetically disconnected from their material environment and from each other. Mesmer's concept of animal magnetism has thus been forgotten and discarded from contemporary theories of psychology and psychological healing.

Although there is discontinuity between Myers' research, modern psi research, and the experiments conducted with animals by Wilson, cited above, some contemporary researchers have been interested in whether there is an unseen energy that connects the healer with those that are healed. In the following section I examine some of those experiments that were used to test this hypothesis.

Magnetism and Water

During the 1960s, biologist Dr Bernard Grad of McGill University in Montreal was interested in determining whether psychic healers actually transmit energy to patients. He began by using plants, which he made ill by soaking them in salty water, which retards growth. He divided seeds into two groups: one soaked in salt water that had been exposed to the laying-on of hands of a healer and the other that was soaked in salt water that had not

been exposed to the healer. The experiment showed that the seeds soaked in the water exposed to the healer grew much taller and healthier than those that were soaked in water that was not exposed to the healer. In later experiments, Grad chemically analysed the water by infrared spectroscopy and discovered that the water treated by the healer had minor shifts in its molecular structure and decreased hydrogen bonding between the molecules: similar effects to that which happen when water is exposed to magnets. These experiments signify that Mesmer was right: that there is a healing energy similar to magnetism. Unfortunately for Mesmer, he did not have the luxury of the technological advances in science that provide infrared spectroscopy.

Grad moved on to mice, which had been given skin wounds in the laboratory. After controlling for a number of factors, even the effect of warm hands, he found that the skin of his test mice healed far more quickly when healers treated them. He also showed that healers could reduce the growth of cancerous tumours in laboratory animals, and those animals with tumours which were not treated by the healer died more quickly. Other scientific studies have shown that people can influence the growth of yeast, fungi and even isolated cancer cells.

The application of quantum theory has the potential to explain the results obtained by the research cited above, and more specifically, Myers' findings in his experiments with automatisms and the implication that discarnate entities influence the living. But first we need a basic introduction to some of the concepts that differentiate quantum theory from classical Newtonian physics.

The Basic Tenets of Quantum Mechanics

I am not an atomic physicist, and quantum mechanics is far too complex a subject for me to explore in depth. However, I believe that I have been able to extract from published research those concepts that can be applied in relation to Myers' theories, and to the results obtained from contemporary research into psi phenomena. Furthermore, the concepts being discovered in the field of sub-atomic particle physics open new avenues of enquiry that may help us to understand the relationship between an alternate reality and our familiar physical world.

The first of these concepts is *non-locality* which refers to the ability of a quantum entity, such as an individual electron or proton, to influence

another quantum particle instantaneously over any distance despite there being no exchange of energy or force. Non-locality suggests that quantum particles, once in contact, retain a connection even when separated, so that the actions of one will always influence the other, no matter how far they may be separated in three-dimensional space. Albert Einstein disparaged this "spooky action at a distance" concept, and it was one of the major reasons why he initially distrusted quantum theory. However, non-locality has been verified by a number of scientists since it was first proven by experiments conducted by Alain Aspect in Paris in 1981.

Non-locality shattered the foundations of classical Newtonian physics. Matter could no longer be considered separate, and actions did not need an observable cause across an observable space. Einstein's axiom that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light was challenged by non-locality. In quantum reality, sub-atomic particles had no need to travel at all if they were in two places at the same time. In a purely classical scientific sense Einstein was right, but the discovery of non-locality demanded a physicalist re-think at a fundamental level. Sub-atomic particles had no meaning in isolation but could only be understood in their *relationships*. The universe, at its most fundamental, was a complex web of interdependent *relationships*, forever indivisible. I have italicised *relationships* in order to reinforce the importance of an understanding of relationships in all aspects of psychology, and this is fundamental to William James' scientific approach in radical empiricism.

The second concept concerns the *relationship* between matter and empty space. Einstein believed that space was a true void until he developed his general theory of relativity, reduced to his famous equation: $E = MC^2$, that shows how energy relates to mass, and showed how space was not a vacuum, but a plenum of activity. Since Einstein's general theory of relativity, it has been discovered that all elementary (sub-atomic) particles interact with each other by exchanging energy through other quantum particles, which are believed to appear out of nowhere, combining and annihilating each other in less than an instant, causing fluctuations in energy without any apparent cause.

The third concept is that of *coherence* and *wave resonance*. Fritz Albert Popp, a theoretical biophysicist from the University of Marburg in Germany, experimented with light in biological systems. He discovered that

some chemical substances can cause cancer by absorbing UV light and changing its frequency. These carcinogens reacted to light only at the specific frequency of 380 nanometres.[14] It has been established from biological experiments that if you can blast a cell with UV light so that 99% of the cell is destroyed, including its DNA, you can almost entirely repair the damage in a single day just by illuminating it with the same wavelength of a very weak intensity. This process is known as *photo-repair*. Popp was surprised to learn that photo-repair works at precisely 380 nanometres wavelength. He concluded that a cancerous compound causes cancer by blocking the light and scrambling it, thereby inhibiting the photo-repair self-healing process.

Popp, and his research student Bernhard Ruth, built a machine called a *photomultiplier* that could measure light in biological systems by counting it photon by photon. They found that photons in living systems had more *coherence* than anything they had ever seen in non-living systems. In quantum physics, *quantum coherence* means that subatomic particles are able to *cooperate*. These subatomic waves or particles not only seem to be aware of each other, but are also interlinked by bands of common electromagnetic field, so that they can communicate synchronistically together. They are like a multitude of tuning forks that all begin to resonate together. As the waves get into phase, or synchronicity, they begin to act like one giant wave and one giant subatomic particle. Something that is done to one of them will affect all the others. This effect is known as *wave resonance*.

Popp was witnessing the highest level of quantum order, or coherence, possible in a living system. He concluded that health was a state of perfect subatomic communication, and ill health was a state where this subatomic communication breaks down. We are ill when our waves are out of synchronicity. Popp also came to realise that light emissions from *wave resonance* had a purpose outside the body. Light was not simply being used to communicate inside the body, but between living things, and he began to postulate that this could be the mechanisms that attracted like to like, or how schools of fish and flocks of birds create perfect and instantaneous coordination.

A corollary of this is that two healthy beings are engaged in photon exchange. For humans this means that if we could take in the photons of

other living things, we might also be able to use the information from them to correct our own Light [15] if it went wrong.

In summary, Popp's research gives an avenue of enquiry to investigate several mysteries concerning the health of individuals and how healers and their patients communicate with each other at the quantum level. Quantum wave resonance and coherence could be a foundation for observations and theories with particular regard to animal magnetism in the physiological sphere, intention (volition) in the mental sphere, and sympathetic resonance in the emotional sphere.

Zero Point Field theory is one of the first attempts to synthesise the disparate research conducted by each independent group of scientists into a cohesive whole. In the process, it also provides a scientific validation of areas that have been the domain of religion, mysticism, alternative medicine or New-Age spirituality.

Quantum Theory and the Mystical Connection

The pioneers of quantum physics, Erwin Schrodinger, Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr and Wolfgang Pauli had some inkling of the metaphysical dimension that scientific enquiry was leading into. If an electron could be everywhere at once then it implied something very profound about the nature of the world at large. They turned their attention to the classical texts of religion and spiritual philosophy. Pauli examined psychoanalysis, archetypes and the Kabala. Bohr turned to the *Tao te Ching,* Schrodinger to Hindu philosophy and Heisenberg to the Platonic theory of ancient Greece. But there was more practical work to be done. Bohr and his colleagues had conducted experiments in the science lab with non-living sub-atomic particles. From that point onwards, a new breed of scientist took on the task of experimentation with living systems, which has led to research that I previously referred to as "psi".

The Mystical Connection and psi Phenomena

Ed Mitchell, an astronaut on the Apollo 14 moon landing, had a profound mystical experience as he looked upon the earth from space. During his moon flight, Mitchell participated in J.B. Rhine's psi experiments in telepathy with startlingly accurate results. Mitchell's experiments with

Rhine add support for Myers' concept of telepathy, on the grounds that the results were beyond the probability of chance.

Mitchell's experiences of a profound mystical nature and the outcome of his participation in the psi experiment prompted him to initiate the founding of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in California. Dean Radin, Senior Research-Scientist of the Institute has compiled the findings of research conducted at the institute, together with the findings of other scientific institutions around the world that have investigated psi phenomena. All of these findings support Mesmer's contention that there is a universal energy that connects all things, planets and people, and Myers' contention that, through the greater Subliminal Self, interactions between people are telepathic and interconnected.

Hal Puthoff, a laser physicist, realised that the concept of the *Zero Point Field* was nothing less than a unifying concept of the universe, which showed that everything was in some sort of connection and balance with the rest of the cosmos. Puthoff postulated that the universe's very currency might be *learned information*, as imprinted on this fluid, mutable field of information. If the Zero Point Field demonstrated that the real currency of the universe, the very reason for its stability, is an exchange of energy, and if we are all connected through the *Field*, then it might just be possible to tap into this vast reservoir of energy and extract information from it. Puthoff's conceptualisation of a universal currency of information gives Myers' observations that somnambulists can access information from beyond the field of everyday conscious awareness the credibility that it originally deserved. Further support for this hypothesis is presented by Erwin Laszlo in the form of the *Akashic Field*, which is purported to be a universal record of all that has ever happened in conscious thought. According to Stanislav Grof:

> An Akashic experience comes in many sizes, forms, and flavours, to all kinds of people, and all its varieties convey information on the real world – the world beyond the brain and the body.

For an understanding of Laszlo's concept, Grof, a psychiatrist with more than fifty years of experience in research of non-ordinary states of consciousness, offers this statement:

> Laszlo's Akashic field is an excellent model for the historical aspect of Jung's collective unconscious. However, Jung's collective unconscious also encompasses another domain, which is radically different from the former – the archetypal realm with its mythological beings and abodes of the Beyond. And yet, in holotropic altered states, visits to archetypal regions and encounters with archetypal figures often appear on the same continuum and in various combinations with experiences reflecting phenomena from the material world. This suggests that, in some unexplained way, traces of the archetypal world are part of the Akashic field, and the Akashic field also mediates experiential access to this domain.

Grof's statement implies support for Myers' concept of the continuum of human experience in an expanded naturalism. It also supports Myers' contention that access to other realms, is facilitated through altered states of consciousness. Jung's "active imagination" and access to archetypes that exist in symbolic form within a "collective unconscious" help to bring all of these concepts together in a conceptual framework that is in keeping with Myers' theories. It is apparent that the theorists cited above are arriving at the same conclusions that Myers postulated, despite the discontinuity between Myers' research and that of modern thinkers.

A similar concept to that of the Akashic record is proposed by Karl Pribram, a neurosurgeon, who presented his notion of the "holotropic brain". Pribram proposed that when we observed the world, we do so on a much deeper level than the nuts and bolts of the world "out there". Pribram postulates that our brain primarily talks to itself and to the rest of the body not with words or images, or even with chemical impulses, but in the language of "wave interference": the language of phase, amplitude and frequency - what he called the *spectral domain*.

In Pribram's theory we perceive an object by *resonating* with it, getting in sync with it. To know the world is to be on its wavelength – literally. Applied to Mesmer's *animal magnetism*, Myers' *community of sensation*, the more modern hypnotic recognition of *rapport*, and the SRT observation of *sympathetic resonance* (which I discuss below) Pribram's holotropic brain provides a mind-body link in the form of "energy frequency synchronistic resonance". This theory can contribute to an understanding of how a telepathic impression can cause the brain to accept anything that is suggested to it, by acknowledging that thoughts can be imprinted on the brain's receptor mechanisms by energy resonance. Recent research postulates that the brain's receptor "antenna" is the pineal gland.

Theoretically, the psi field, or the Akashic field, or the Zero-Point field is a sub-quantum field in which everything that has ever happened remains permanently holographically recorded. These theories lend support to Myers' concept of an expanded naturalism and help to explain his observations of spiritualist mediums' abilities to access information from beyond conscious awareness by way of entering into an altered state of consciousness.

Emotional Sympathetic Resonance

Following Grad's successful experiment with the effect of healers on plants growing in salt water, he hypothesised that negative *feelings* might have a corresponding negative effect on the growth of plants. Grad had several psychiatric patients hold containers of ordinary water, which were to be used to sprout seeds. One man, being treated for clinical depression, was noticeably more depressed than the others. Later, when Grad tried to sprout seeds using water from the depressed patients, the water that had been held by the more depressed man actually suppressed growth.

Grad's experiment with negative emotions provides a clear insight into why experiments that do not account for the emotions of the participants and the experimenter are subject to a serious methodological error.

Furthermore, and far more importantly, Grad's findings provide support for the hypothesis that the synchronicity of emotional energy frequency between a subject and another agency, such as a negative spirit form, is one of the ways in which a person with a volatile negative emotional energy will attract destructive spirit entities. It has been suggested by psychiatrist Andrew Powell, that people with a negative view of the world, and those who are unable to take control of powerful negative emotions, will attract negative spirit attachments. This synchronicity of emotional energy is known as *sympathetic resonance*. Just as a person with negative emotions will attract negative entities, so too will a person who views the world with love and compassion attract spirit entities that are disembodied energies of love and compassion.

According to Powell mediums dedicated to working with "the Light" receive help from spirit that is uplifting and inspiring. Prayer, likewise, brings an infusion of peace and love. In contrast however, where a person's mental state is fragmented or in disarray, then the door is open wide to influences of a disturbing or even dangerous nature. For example,

anthropologist Frederico Sal y Rosas, from 1935 to 1957, discovered 176 cases of "susto" (the Spanish word for *fright*) in the Quechua Indians of Peru. Sal y Rosas emphasised that *susto* is not merely a superstition, but a medical condition that can be understood scientifically.

According to Sal y Rosas, the Quechua Indians believed that the soul or part of it can leave the body or be forced out of it by fright. The susto disease can occur in one of two ways: either the soul is frightened by something in the environment, like a loud clap of thunder, or it can be forced out by a malevolent spirit. For the Quechua Indians, the cure for susto is soul retrieval by the Shaman.

Separating out from each other the frequencies of *physical* energy, *mental* energy and *emotional* energy can, theoretically, offer a partial answer to any hypothesis that involves the mysterious phenomena surrounding non-medical methods of healing. Experiments cited below give insights into the energetic connection between living systems that can be measured by instrumentation.

Physiological Resonance and the Zero-Point Field

Cleve Backster, a New York polygraph expert, had been conducting experiments to see if plants could register emotion in the form of electrical signalling, in the same way that humans do in response to stress on standard lie detector equipment. Backster measured the galvanic response of a plant when one of its leaves had been burned. The plant registered the same polygraph stress response as a human would if his hand had been burned. Even more interesting was the fact that a neighbouring plant that was not being burned showed the same levels of distress to the one that was being burned. Backster burned a leaf of a plant that was not connected to the equipment. The original plant was still connected to the polygraph and registered the same pain response that it had when its own leaf had been burned. This suggested that the plant that was still connected, but not burned, had received information via some kind of extrasensory mechanism and was demonstrating empathy that had a physical effect. This seemed to point to some sort of interconnectedness between living things.

The "Backster-Effect" has been seen between both plants and animals. When brine shrimp in one location died suddenly, this fact seemed to register instantly with others in another location, as recorded on a psycho-galvanic response instrument (PGR). Backster conducted similar experiments

with plants and animals, including paramecium, mould cultures and blood samples with several hundred miles separating them. In every case some mysterious communication occurred between these plants and animals.

These early experiments of Backster's led to further research to investigate this mysterious connection between living organisms that eventually culminated in the modern concept of *remote viewing*, which helps to explain the outcome of Myers' experiments in the projection of phantasms of the living and astral projection which I examined in Chapter Nine.

Remote Viewing, Astral Projection and Myers' Theory of Sensory Automatisms

Hal Puthoff, a physicist at Stanford University Research Institute, was interested in Backster's experiments to see if there was some quantum effect at work. He built a device called a Superconducting Quantum Interference Device (SQUID) that was designed to act as a shield against all electromagnetic interference, in order to hear the infinitesimal language of a subatomic particle.

Puthoff looked upon this device as the ultimate test of whether there was such a thing as psychic ability. He was given the opportunity to use the SQUID to test the psychic ability of a medium, "Ingo Swann", who had been working on ESP experiments with Gertrude Schmeidler,[16] Professor in Psychology at City College, New York.

Puthoff asked Swann if he could deliberately stop the fluctuation on the machine's output tape, which was indicated by a regular "S" shaped curve. Swann closed his eyes and concentrated for 45 seconds. For the same length of time the machine's output device stopped creating equidistant peaks and troughs and traced one long straight line. Swann explained that he could look into the machine and by concentrating on various parts he could alter what the machine did. He could even describe and draw the inner components of the machine with complete accuracy.

Puthoff assumed that there was some non-local affect between Swann and the machine. What he had witnessed could have been described as *astral projection*, or *out-of-body experience*, or *clairvoyance*. After much deliberation on the common interpretation of these terms, and to identify his concept as unique, Puthoff settled on calling it *remote viewing*.

The Central Intelligence Agency received news that the Soviet Union was conducting experiments with clairvoyants in remote viewing for the purposes of spying on the United States. When the CIA learned of Puthoff's experiments with Swann they invited him to set up their own experiments on their behalf. Puthoff recruited Russell Targ, a colleague who had pioneered development of the laser. This led to a 13-year project that coincided with Puthoff's work on the Zero-Point Field theory.

At the close of the programme in 1995, a US government sponsored review agreed that the statistical results for remote viewing phenomena were far beyond what could have been attributable to chance. As far as the US government were concerned, the Stanford Research Institute studies gave America a possible advantage over Russian intelligence. But to the scientists themselves, these results represented far more than a manoeuvre in the cold war. It suggested that because of our constant dialogue with the Zero Point Field, we are potentially everywhere at once.

Russell Targ published his own account of the Stanford remote viewing research and applied his findings to healing. He concluded that:

> We would say that we don't have to search for psi, but our task is to remove the barriers that we and our society have erected against it. Our understanding of mind-to-mind communications derived from experience, as well as science, offer us on-going opportunities to achieve this goal.

In my introduction to this book, I explained how in SRT, the mediumistic practitioner, by using the "remote" method, allows a part of his/her consciousness to access the energy field of the patient/client to see where there are disruptions in the energetic field (which may also be referred to as the "spiritual energy field" or "aura").

SRT training enables the practitioner to identify disruptions, anomalies, interference and inappropriate attachments from other people or other forms of consciousness, living, deceased, or even non-human and deal with them in an appropriate way that benefits the client *and* the attached forms of consciousness.

It is my contention that what the Stanford research reveals from the application of quantum theory is precisely what Myers' conceptual framework of the Subliminal Self provided for nineteenth-century psychology over a hundred and twenty five years ago.

Volition (or Intention) as a Primary Variable in the Process of Sympathetic Resonance

Elizabeth Targ, is a conventional psychiatrist and the daughter of Russell Targ, who was involved in the US Department of Defense investigation into remote viewing. In her research into the efficacy of distant healing, the positive results obtained were described as "inescapable". Targ found that no matter which type of healing was used and no matter what the healers' view of a higher being was, the healers were dramatically contributing to the physical and psychological well-being of their patients.

Elizabeth Targ's study, together with the work of William Braud, raised a number of profound implications about the nature of illness and healing. Braud, for example, makes these comments in the introduction to his volume, *Distant Mental Influence*:

> Concisely stated, the evidence compiled in this volume indicates that, under certain conditions, it is possible to know and to influence the thoughts, images, feelings, behaviours, and physiological and physical activities of other persons and living organisms – even when the influencer and the influenced are separated by great distances in space and time, beyond the reach of the conventional senses. Because the usual modes of knowing and influence are eliminated in these studies, their success reveals modes of human interaction and interconnection beyond those currently recognised in the conventional natural, behavioural and social sciences. Besides indicating areas of incompleteness and misapprehensions about such phenomena that exist in current scientific theories, these distant mental influence findings have important implications for our fuller understanding of consciousness, health and wellness, our typically untapped human potentials, and the spiritual aspects of our lives.

In Braud's and Targ's experiments, it is strongly suggested that *intention* on its own may be a healing element.

In similar research, Carol Nash, at St. John's University in Philadelphia, found that people could influence the growth rate of bacteria simply by willing it so. These findings continue to challenge the mechanistic sciences, but quantum theory may provide the framework for an explanation with the concept of particle/wave potential.

Quantum theory suggests that a sub-atomic particle may be understood as both a wave and a particle at the same time. As a wave, it is purely

potential, but the moment it is observed or measured then it becomes a particle and comes into existence. Quantum physicists began to consider that the most essential ingredient of the interconnected universe was the living *consciousness* that observed it. In classical physics, the experimenter was considered as a separate entity: a silent observer attempting to understand a universe that continued whether he or she was observing it or not. In quantum physics, however, it was discovered that the state of all possibilities of any quantum particle collapsed into an object as soon as it was observed or a measurement taken.

To explain these strange events, quantum physicists had postulated that a participatory relationship existed between the observer and the observed. These subatomic particles could only be considered as "probably" existing in space and time until they were perceived, and the act of observing or measuring them forced them into a static state. These observations had shattering implications about the nature of reality and the part that consciousness has to play in creating it.

Implications for Spirit Release Practitioners and Parapsychologists

The entire discussion of this book is leading towards the application of Myers' concepts to the scientific framework of SRT. According to Myers, all human experience is connected in a continuum that is natural. Human beings are able to communicate with each other and with discarnate entities through accessing altered states of consciousness according to their abilities, vulnerabilities and intentions. Quantum theory seems to be offering a link between physics and spirituality. One of the conceptual components of this link is that of *volition* (or *intention)*:

> In the universe there is an immeasurable, indescribable force which shamans call intent, and absolutely everything that exists in the entire cosmos is attached to intent by a connecting link.

Let us now consider Mesmer's scientific theory on his own healing abilities, in relation to what we have learned from Myers and from the most rudimentary introduction to quantum theory.

Mesmer's system of healing the sick can be reduced to four basic principles: (a) a subtle physical fluid fills the universe and connects everything in it, including man, all living things, the earth, all heavenly bodies, and is instrumental in connecting man to man; (b) disease is caused by an imbalance in the distribution of this fluid in the human body and a cure is affected when the equilibrium is restored; (c) the fluid can be stored, channelled and conveyed between human beings; (d) using a variety of techniques, a crisis of symptoms can be provoked in patients and diseases cured.

Let us now substitute Mesmer's terminology with what we have learned from quantum theory, and expressed in different terms:

Mesmer's system of healing the sick can be reduced to four basic principles: (a) a subtle energy of *Light* fills the universe at the sub-atomic level and connects everything in it, including man, all living things, the earth, all heavenly bodies, and is instrumental in connecting man to man; (b) disease is caused by an imbalance in the frequency of this Light in the human body and a cure is affected when equilibrium is restored, (c) the Light can be stored, channelled and conveyed between human beings; (d) using a variety of techniques a crisis of symptoms can be provoked in patients and diseases cured.

The differences between the two paragraphs above illustrate not only a simple change of terminology that is based on new knowledge, but also illustrates just how far social and cultural belief systems, represented by a few well-chosen words, can influence our understanding of what is really fundamental. We could go just a little further and suggest that the term "psi" in current use by parapsychologists could be replaced by the term "Light" as it is applied in the alternative description of Mesmer's theory above. We could, alternatively, replace psi and Light with "Spirit" as the unifying principle that connects everything in the universe. Alternatively, we could name the mysterious energy that Mesmer named, *animal magnetism*, and Gassner called *prayer* with the label of *Zero-Point Field* energy.

It is my contention that all of these names for this mysterious energy are interchangeable depending on the belief system and world-view of the observer or experimenter. However, in the clinical environment when a patient is relieved of pain by a healer or a Spirit Release Practitioner and asks, "How does that work?"- What would the answer be? Does the psychiatrist tell the patient that he has been cured by the power of "psi", or

by the power of "spirit"? Surely the answer must fit with the beliefs of the patient, but, beyond the name that is given to it, what is the real nature of those forces that come to bear in the healing process?

The perceived miraculous quality of Mesmer's work was recorded by a sceptic appointed by Baron Horeczky de Horka of Rohow in Slovakia, who invited Mesmer to cure his nervous spasms. The sceptic, whose name was Seyfert, assuming that Mesmer was a quack, observed him closely in order to expose him. He writes in the third person:

> Shortly after Mesmer's arrival, several of the castle's inhabitants began to feel pains or muscular sensations in their bodies as they came near him. Even the sceptical Seyfert noticed that he was seized with an invincible sleepiness when Mesmer played music. It was not long before he became thoroughly convinced of Mesmer's extraordinary powers. He saw how Mesmer could elicit morbid symptoms in people around him, particularly in those he had magnetized. A lady who was singing lost her voice as soon as Mesmer touched her hand and recovered it when he made a gesture with his finger. Seyfert saw that Mesmer was able to influence people sitting in another room simply by pointing to their images reflected in a mirror, even though these people could see him neither directly or indirectly in the mirror.

Here is recorded evidence that whether the thought, the suggestion or the intention is directed face-to-face or indirectly through a mirror, telephone or any other means is irrelevant. When the thought is directed to a person then that person will receive it. Whether the recipient actually becomes a percipient and is affected by the thought will depend on their level of receptivity, and their ability (or vulnerability) to be influenced by a thought that is transmitted via the subatomic (or spirit) realm by way of the subliminal mind.

When a spirit release practitioner asks a patient's Higher Self to guide him or her to the thoughts and feelings of the patient then that is what happens. If there is agreement in the *intention* of the healer, the patient and the Higher Self of the patient then the healing will begin. This can be demonstrated under controlled conditions and provides the foundation for a protocol for addressing the efficacy of SRT remote interventions. However, without *intention*, or without the agreement of just one of the parties, then the process of recovery may be compromised.

Myers did not have at his disposal any of the knowledge that has been accrued by quantum physicists or the technological equipment that is available to modern researchers. However, modern research is producing results that support Myers' contentions that human beings are much more than the expression of cerebral automata. Quantum physics apparently recognises that we are all connected in a way that transcends space and time.

Chapter Eleven

Evidence for a Spirit World

The evidence that spirit beings exist in a realm that integrates with, but is beyond the three-dimensional physical universe (or four-dimensional space-time continuum), was examined by Myers and his colleagues at the Society for Psychic Research from 1882 until his death in 1901. Although much of what Myers discovered has been ignored by the mainstream, research has continued by the SPR and an increasingly diverse array of institutions to this day.

Myers' main theme was to demonstrate, using scientific data, that:

> At the depths of human personality there lie indications of a life and faculty that is not limited to a planetary existence, or to this material world.

Myers' introduction to the medium, the Reverend Stainton Moses was to provide him with a solid foundation for all his future research with other somnambulists and spiritualist mediums, as well as members of the public who responded to surveys conducted by the SPR.

Through a detailed study of sensory and motor automatisms, phenomena have been observed, which, according to Myers, are:

> ...impossible to explain except by supposing that there is a spiritual world in which the individualities of our departed friends still actually subsist.

In addition to his own observations and experiments with somnambulists including Stainton Moses and the celebrated "Mrs Piper" (who impressed William James) Myers was not negligent in reviewing evidence to support his hypothesis from a variety of sources including the records of the eighteenth-century scientist and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

Quite apart from the documentary evidence uncovered by Myers, ordinary people have experiences in private that are not documented or, in

many instances, not even talked about outside of their immediate circle of family and friends. On this Myers writes:

> I have reason to believe, both from what I have witnessed myself and from the reports of others, that occasional phenomena of ecstasy and possession are not infrequent in many family circles or groups of intimate friends. The persons concerned however, do not realise the importance of keeping accurate records. Manifestations can be sporadic and not easily susceptible to any detailed examination. Often these phenomena are concealed from outsiders. Sometimes due to the sacredness of the manifestations, or the tendency to regard the trance to be regarded as some sort of calamity and the medium regarded as having some kind of distressing disease.

Other evidence that Myers had access to were the case files accumulated by his friend William James, some of which were presented in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience* that was published in 1902 shortly after Myers own death. The task of collecting further evidence of a spirit world following on from the work of James was taken up by Professor James Hyslop of Columbia University, who published his *Contact with the Other World* in1919.

Spiritualist' Communications with the Deceased and Spirit Guides

The criteria used by Myers for validating the veridical authenticity of the communications between spiritualist mediums and their controls were: (a) more than one person might be independently affected by the phenomenon (b) the information conveyed would be true and externally validated and (c) previously unknown to the recipient. The following is an example wherein the "control" presents himself as a doctor and gives externally validated medical information that the recipient could not possibly have known:

> Our medium was in most cases Mr Andrew .... I mentioned an invalid brother. He suffered from a heart affliction known as presystolic murmur. At one sitting we consulted a medical man who called himself Dr Snobinski of Russia. This gentleman not only prescribed for my brother, but also furnished us with a diagram of the human heart, and put a special mark to indicate the valve diseased in my brother's case. How this diagram came to be drawn by a

person ignorant of human physiology, and how the diseased valve was shown and explained by one ignorant of pathology, was more than I could account for.

Possession by a discarnate spirit with knowledge that the medium could not possibly have gained by any other means is the hallmark of genuine spiritualist mediumship, and was investigated by a great many researchers during the late nineteenth century. Although evidence was provided by such renowned mediums as Mrs Piper, Stainton Moses and others, the activities of charlatans, fraudsters and stage performers damaged the credibility of genuine mediums and research in this area lost its fashionable appeal. Despite the damage done to serious research by fraudsters, the evidence provided by genuine mediums in the Victorian era is a rich source of evidence to support the survival hypothesis.

Modern Scientific Approaches to the Survival Hypothesis

Modern evidence to support the hypothesis for the existence of a spirit world can come from a variety of sources. There are cases of individuals who have been shown, or rather *taken* to a spirit world by what they may describe as *spirit beings* or *spirit guides,* such as the case of "Mr Skilton" of Florida cited by Myers:

I have been engaged a great part of my life as a locomotive engineer, and this happened while in that business. I was engaged with two other men one day about two o'clock PM in taking out some evergreen trees from a box car to take home and set out; they were large and heavy. Just at that instant I saw a medium-sized person standing at my right hand clothed in white with a bright countenance, beaming with intelligence. I knew what he wanted in an instant, although he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Come with me." We moved upward, and a little to the south-east, with the speed of lightning, as it were; I could see the hills, trees, buildings and roads as we went up side by side until they vanished out of our sight. As we passed on, this glorious being that was with me told me he was going to show me that bright heavenly world. We soon came to a world of light and beauty, many thousand times larger than this earth, with at least four times as much light. The beauties of this place were beyond any human being to describe. I was seated by the tree of life on a square bunch of what appeared to be a green velvet moss, about eighteen inches high; there I saw many thousand spirits clothed in white and singing heavenly music – the sweetest song I ever heard. I here told my attendant that it was the first time I had ever been

> perfectly at rest in my life. They did not converse by sound, but each knew the other's thoughts at the instant, and conversation was carried on in that way, and so with me.

Mr Skilton goes on to describe how he met with deceased relatives before returning to the box-car that he had been unloading. His workmates reported that he had not said a word for twenty-six minutes whilst he worked and moved eight barrels of flour with the ease of a giant without effort.

Similar experiences are reported by persons who have experienced a physical death, or *near-death experience* (NDE). Others describe an *out-of-body experience* (OBE) when they spontaneously find themselves in a spirit realm. Recent research has also been conducted by leading neurologist Peter Fenwick on what he calls the "end of life experience" (ELE) when those who are dying are visited at the deathbed by those non-corporeal beings that will escort them to the *Light*.

In subjective reports where there is consistency there is an identifiable pattern, as there is in all scientific discoveries, and it is the discovery of repeatable patterns that provides science with its models and theories. On this Professor David Fontana writes:

> If survival of death is to be meaningful – that is if the individual is to feel that the state after death is in some major way connected with the state before – we have to suppose that it involves a continuation of earthly thoughts, ideas, concerns, feelings, and memories. Moreover, we must suppose that individuals still have their senses, and can see and hear and feel things in much the same way as before death. In other words, that there is an important sense in which the person still recognises himself, much as we recognise that the person we are when we wake up in the morning is the same one who went to sleep the night before. But we wonder how this can be possible if we are talking about a disembodied state? Much of our experience is registered through the sensory organs, so without them it is very difficult to conceptualise a life after death. This inability is just one of the reasons why physical science either ignores or rejects the notion of survival, and makes no effort to mount research into the subject.

Instrumental Voice Communication (IVC) or EVP

Beginning in the 1950s a new avenue of research has been emerging that investigates the phenomenon of receiving and analysing what appear to be spirit voices through technological instrumentation such as radio, television,

telephones and tape-recorders, known as Instrumental Voice Communication (IVC) or Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP).

Professor David Fontana, founder chair of the Transpersonal Section of the British Psychological Society and former President of the Society for Psychical Research gives a detailed review of the research conducted by several investigators scattered throughout Europe who recorded communications with discarnate entities using a variety of technological devices including television and tape recorders. In keeping with the need for brevity I shall cite only one example from Fontana's review:

> ... [on] September 17, 1952, when Italian Roman Catholic priests Father Ernetti of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice and Father Gemelli, a medical doctor at the Catholic University in Milan, were investigating in the University's Experimental Physics Laboratory ways of filtering the taped sound of Gregorian chants in order to enhance their acoustical purity. The efforts of the two priests were hampered by the fact that the wire used by tape recorders before the invention of magnetic tape broke frequently, and required constant and delicate repair work. Finally, Father Gemelly, as was his habit when exasperated, called on his deceased father for help. On starting the machine again, the Fathers hear, not the Gregorian chant upon which they were working, but the voice of Gemelly Senior, "Of course I'll help you! I am always with you."
>
> The astonished priests obtained an audience with Pope Pious XII to acquaint him of the incident, and were reassured by his strongly positive response. He considered that the reception of the voice through an electronic machine might initiate "a new scientific study for confirming faith in the afterlife." Professor Francois Brune, a leading theologian and himself a Roman Catholic priest and expert on ITC who details these facts (Brune 2002), reports that although the Church itself remains neutral on whether or not ITC really represents contact with the dead, seeing this as a matter for scientists and technicians, he himself is convinced of the strong support that it provides for survival.

Pope Pious' endorsement of this potential line of research is in complete contrast with the attitude of the Church during the Victorian period when it rebuked research into life after death. Conflicts between religion and science can only be resolved with cooperation between the two and Pope Pious XII paved the way for modern scientists to follow this line of enquiry.

Cooperation between science and religion, and cooperation between scientific disciplines, is essential if answers are to be found to questions regarding a spirit world and spirit communication; and Myers' model of

mind can provide a start point for any research project that attempts to approach these questions.

Modern Experiments with Mediums

Gary Schwartz, professor of psychology, medicine, neurology and psychiatry at the University of Arizona, conducted a series of experiments over a period of three years with mediums to test the life-after-death hypothesis. His work was published in 2002.

Schwartz' experiments were designed to eradicate any possibility of fraud or deception, and he designed protocols that would withstand any rigorous criticism of methodology. Inspired in part by the experiments with Leonora Piper conducted by William James and others at the Society for Psychical Research, Schwartz quoted James: "In order to disprove that all crows are black, it is enough to find one white crow".

Following the research and its conclusive findings, Schwartz acknowledges that his scientific training was a significant contributor to his scepticism, and in spite of the evidence before him he acknowledges that he persisted in expressing an irrational opinion:

> The truth is that I was being scientifically hypocritical. I had failed to do the very thing I always try to encourage my students to and colleagues to do.... I realized that concerning belief in survival of consciousness, I was at the "opinions" level. Scientific theory strongly indicated the plausibility of the hypothesis, and the data were clear enough to enable me to hold the opinion that survival, in theory, was true.... I had witnessed with my own eyes. My degree of doubt in the presence of all the data was frankly irrational. I was experiencing skeptimania. I knew it, but I hadn't been able to do anything about it.

However, the evidence changed his views and Schwartz' research is important in two respects: first it demonstrates that experiments with mediums can be replicated under rigorous scientific scrutiny, and second that scientific "opinion" can persist in an irrational scepticism that refutes even the most compelling evidence. Schwartz expressed his fear as follows:

> My growing fear was that if I actually summarised and integrated the entire set of observations, I might be forced to conclude that – at least concerning the specific research mediums we worked with – the sceptics were completely wrong.

One of Myers' methods of validating his findings was to obtain verification on the information given by a medium from a secondary source. Modern scientific method on the other hand uses statistical methods in replicated studies to test the possibility of chance. Commenting on the work of Schwartz, Fontana says that the odds against the results being obtained by chance are three in a hundred.

Modern research that has a contribution to make to the theory that consciousness is not brain-dependent, and can contribute to the afterlife debate, are those reports of near-death and out-of-body experiences.

Near-Death (NDE) and Out of Body Experiences (OBE)

The essential difference between a near-death (NDE) and an out-of-body (OBE) experience is that in the former the body is clinically dead and life-monitoring instruments show the "flat-line" of brain inactivity. In contrast, an OBE can be experienced by anyone at any time.

Mainstream medicine is unable to explain adequately OBEs, such as "break-off syndrome", when pilots of fighter aircraft in high altitude, supersonic flight, experience themselves outside their own aircraft watching themselves sitting inside the cockpit. This is a form of OBE that can be compared with *intended astral projection* alluded to in Chapter Nine, but with the difference that it is not intentional, but is spontaneous and unexpected.

Research into near-death experiences was initiated by a report by philosophy lecturer Raymond Moody who published 150 first-hand accounts of NDEs; and has been continued by psychiatrists Bruce Greyson and Peter Fenwick, psychologist Kenneth Ring, cardiologist Michael Sabom and many others. There are now literally thousands of documented cases of near-death and out of body experiences from these different researchers in their respective disciplines.

Analysis of these reports reveals several consistencies in the phenomena experienced. Firstly, when consciousness leaves a body that ceases to function according to medical instrumentation, there is the experience of travelling through a dark tunnel and out into a brilliant white light. This experience is accompanied by feelings of peacefulness without any sense of fear. Second, there is a meeting with someone who is there to welcome, either a close relative who is deceased, or a spirit guide, or guardian angel. Thirdly, there is the experience of telepathic communication and instant

rapport with these and other beings. Fourthly, there is the sensing of some kind of barrier, or point of no return, where, should one cross it, there is no going back to the body. Finally, there is the reluctant, but otherwise accepted decision to return to the body in order to complete unfinished earthly business.

Individual experiences do vary. Where some people describe realms of pure light and love, others may describe a peaceful garden, or green fields and blue skies. It would seem that people form their own personal construct of what the spirit realms are like during these initial encounters. Whereas some people may feel comfortable with the purely energetic nature of the environment, others may feel the need to give more quasi-physical detail to their surroundings.

It is difficult to assess how many people have near-death or out-of-body experiences. When Peter Fenwick appealed through national media for people to report their experiences, he received a huge response. He selected 500 from those who responded and sent them a detailed questionnaire. They universally expressed their delight that at last they could share their experience with someone, without the fear of being ridiculed.

According to British researcher, Natalie Tobert, the fear of disclosure is a significant inhibitory factor to revealing religious or spiritual experiences. Both Tobert and Danish anthropologist, Merete Jakobsen comment on the number of cases held in the Alister Hardy archive of religious experience that reported their reluctance to say anything of their experiences until encouraged by either a newspaper article, television or radio interview of Sir Alister inviting them to do so. The reasons given for not speaking about their religious experiences include the fear of not being believed or being labelled as mentally ill. These are clear indications that such experiences are far more common than may be assumed.

Another important issue with near-death experiences is how often they involve encounters with negative entities and so-called “hellish” environments. Those researchers cited above do mention a few cases, but Bruce Greyson felt the need to investigate further and after ten years of additional research he found another 50 cases which he reported in *Psychiatry* in 1984. Other researchers such as Phyllis Atwater and cardiologist Maurice Rawlings suggest that hellish experiences are far more common than expected. An example of a negative near-death experience, where dangerous entities were encountered, is the case of “Howard Storm”.

One afternoon in 1985, whilst on a trip to Europe, Howard Storm, a professor of art at the University of North Kentucky, was suddenly taken ill with a perforated small intestine and rushed to hospital in Paris. As he awaited an operation the following morning, he was in such intense pain that he felt he could not survive. Then, drifting in and out of consciousness, he suddenly found himself standing by the side of the bed looking down at his own body.

He heard voices saying they could help him and he followed them into a hazy fog. The silhouetted figures became increasingly aggressive and when he tried to turn back they pushed him and started to claw and bite at him. As fast as he tried to push them away, more arrived who wanted to hurt him and cause him pain. They seemed to feed off his distress and misery. An inner voice told him to pray, and in spite of his atheism and rational mind he started to recite the Lord's Prayer. This sent his tormentors into a frenzy and they left him alone. He still felt afraid and very much alone, and in his desperation he called the name of Jesus to save him. He then saw a spot of light that grew as it moved closer until it surrounded him with a radiant love and compassion. It then took him into the Light. Storm's personal account has been recorded in video and can be found on *You Tube*.

This case demonstrates the concept of "sympathetic resonance" that I explored in Chapter Ten. The theory is that whatever emotion is being experienced at the time of death has a frequency that is transmitted outwards, and those non-corporeal entities that exist with a similar frequency, or use it for their own existence, will be attracted to the dying person.

Confusion, fear and anger may be seen as attractants to negative energies that feed off these powerful emotions. If these mechanisms are at work in attracting negative entities to the living, then it may be hypothesised that they would be even more effective without the constraints of the filtering system of the biological organism.

During the course of the 110 year interval between Myers' research and the modern day, scientific terminology has changed. NDE and OBE are fashionable terms that were not known to Myers and his colleagues. But in Myers' view, research into NDEs and OBEs would remain at the very heart of the science of psychology, and the search for answers concerning the survival of the spirit after death. I can only speculate that Myers would have been disappointed that the bulk of the research into NDEs has been reported

by cardiologists and neurologists and not by psychologists. He would probably agree that mainstream psychology has still not found its way back to its core issue of investigating the true nature of the human personality.

Modern researchers continue to complicate these research issues by inventing more new terminology that takes us even further from these core issues. For example, John Randall, in his review of Janice Holden's *Handbook of Near-Death Experiences*, published in 2009, makes the comment that NDE is at the heart of parapsychology, and he disagrees with the growing tendency to redefine the subject as the study of anomalies with the new term "anomalistic psychology". There can be no doubt that Myers would agree with him. I am also sure that Myers would maintain his objection by the use of the terms *parapsychology* and *psi* in place of the term *psychical research*.

There appears to be a tension between two opposing forces at work in the search for answers to the survival hypothesis. On one hand the science of psychology continues to fragment itself into ever more discriminatory disciplines, as it moves further and further away from its core task. On the other hand, there are researchers from the biological sciences, such as Bruce Lipton and Rupert Sheldrake who appear to be ploughing a furrow that is in parallel with the path that was pioneered by Myers. It is my contention that this parallel furrow is in sympathy with mystical and religious experiences, and with traditional religious practices from many parts of the modern world.

Religious and Spiritual Practice

There remain those spiritual teachers and practitioners of the traditional religious and spiritual philosophies, who live their lives according to what they teach. An example is Seiyu Kiriyama, founder of the Agon Shu Buddhist Association in Japan. Kiriyama draws our attention to the writings of Leopold Szondi (1893-1986), the Hungarian psychoanalyst who proposed a third layer of collective consciousness that theoretically resides between the personal unconscious of Freudian psycho-analytics and the collective unconscious of Jungian theory. Avoiding any references to life after death, or reincarnation, because of the prevailing fashion to disregard such things, Szondi called this intermediate layer the "familial unconscious", and on this Kiriyama writes:

> The desires of specific ancestors are repressed in the intermediate layer of the unconscious as drives and these drives determine the object choices a person makes in love, friendship, profession, sickness, and possibly even the mode of death.

As well as avoiding controversy by not alluding to life after death, Kiriyama reports that because of the difficulty in accepting these ideas, Szondi compiled a sufficient number of case histories to prove his hypothesis and accumulated a staggering amount of evidence that was sufficient enough to gain recognition from the receptive psychoanalytic community at the time.

Kiriyama cites the theory of Szondi as an integral factor in his model to explain the Buddhist concept of karma and reincarnation. In his own work, *You Have Been Here Before*, published in 2000 Kiriyama cites many of the cases from his own experience as a practising Buddhist healer of people's relationships with family members and with aspects of themselves from previous lives.

Kiriyama claims that it is not so hard to determine that a person is being affected by a negative spiritual influence when one has the "psychic ability of spiritual insight". But he states that, no matter how gifted you may be, it can still be very difficult to distinguish the difference between cases of possession and cases of reincarnation. This kind of understanding, according to Kiriyama, requires esoteric training in principles and techniques that are contained in *The Six Yogas of Naropa* and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Among these techniques is the Tibetan *summoning of spirits* that enabled him to discern immediately whether a person was affected by an aspect of reincarnation or of possession. He cites the case of "Mieko" from his own case files:

> Mieko was the reincarnation of a woman who had tragically committed suicide by throwing herself into a river after being abandoned by the man she loved. In her current life she was very athletic, but was unable to go anywhere near water and had never learned to swim. The case is representative of the principle that, according to Kiriyama, when a person suffers a traumatic death in a previous life it causes them to be afraid of whatever it was that had killed them. For example; a person who was stabbed to death would be afraid of knives. A person who reincarnates after an unnatural death has knowledge of the circumstances lodged deep in their memory.

What Kiriyama was able to do was to access the past-life memory of Mieko through his ability to enter into the *subliminal* mental state that facilitates access to the intermediate level of the *familial unconscious* according to Szondy.

Other authors on the life between lives, such as Edith Fiore, Irene Hickman, Michael Newton and Shakantala Modi provide evidence from their own case files as practicing psychiatrists and hypnotherapists, and a review of the evidence has been compiled by Ian Lawton in his *Big Book of the Soul* published in 2008.

Our investigation for evidence to support the hypothesis that a realm exists where spirits reside would not be complete without returning to that very special phenomenon that excited Myers and his colleagues at the Society for Psychical Research more than one hundred years ago – that of automatic writing, or *psychography*. It is fortunate that modern science has not neglected automatic writing altogether, and for a review of this evidence we must refer to the work of scientists who have not been constrained by Western dogmatism in scientific exploration. Here we can find a very important link between automatic writing, other "channelled" works and the very latest techniques in neuro-imaging. These concepts are brought together in the following chapter: *Psychography and Neuro-imaging*.

Chapter Twelve

Psychography and Neuro-imaging

In support of the hypothesis that a spirit realm exists in parallel with the physical, literally hundreds of books are claimed by their authors to have been written under the guidance and inspiration (or channeled) from the realms of spirit. Naturally these claims are in need of support for their validity and authenticity with external validation.

Many creative individuals such as artists, writers and composers of great works of classical composition claim to have been inspired by help and guidance from spirit realms and attribute the origin of their creations accordingly. Such artists often refer to their ability to create in such a manner as a "gift from God". Mozart, for example, described his gift as seeing in his mind's eye his composition as being already written and then copying what he saw by writing it down. Such works are simply regarded by modern consensus to be the results of innate genius and a creative imagination.

Frederic Myers was fascinated by this phenomenon and spent much energy in investigating the possible mechanisms that allowed the transmission of information from the deepest regions of the subliminal mind or from a spirit realm into the expressive conscious awareness of the creative genius. The question remains; how can we possibly be sure of the validity of spirit inspiration that is expressed in writing against the explanation that these are simply the results of an active imagination or deliberate fraud?

Should it be true that creative genius could be the manifestation of a discarnate mind through a living person, there are three possible mechanisms for such phenomena. The first is the subtle influence of spirit in the form of ideas (inspiration) without the conscious awareness of the writer. The second method is *dictation* from spirit with the conscious awareness of the medium, and the third is "direct" otherwise known as *automatic* or *involuntary* or *passive* writing.

Examples of the second type could include Myers' own dictated, encrypted messages from beyond the veil of physical death to three unconnected mediums in the United States, England and India, in the "cross-correspondence" evidence that is presented in *The Future and Beyond*.

Myers went to great lengths to search for valid evidence for life after death when he was living, and after his own death he went to extraordinary lengths to provide the evidence himself from the "other side". It is important to point out that Myers' efforts to provide such evidence are serious contributions to the science of afterlife research.

The dictation method may be termed "psychography" which is a term that was introduced by Allan Kardec in chapter thirteen of *The Medium's Book*, published in 1874 where he describes several different forms of psychography which include use of the planchette to which is attached a pencil without human contact. Other forms of psychography, according to Kardec, include indirect and direct. Indirect is when the writer is inspired by the spirit. Another term often used to describe this form of writing is "channeled".

William James is claimed to have dictated his own experiences of the afterlife to the medium channel Jane Roberts in *The Afterdeath Journal of an American Philosopher*. *Seth Speaks* is another work that, it is claimed by Roberts, was channeled from an "ascended master" known as "Seth".

Both of these publications are subject to detailed scrutiny primarily because of Jane Roberts' creativity in writing science fiction. Her work on William James could easily have been written from information that has previously been documented in his biography and then embellished. Roberts' work with Seth needs to be reconciled with other works from so-called "ascended masters" in order to verify consistencies with more ancient mystical texts such as *Rig Veda*, the *Upanishads*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the Buddhist *Dīgha Nikāya* and the Yoga *Sutras*.

In contrast with channeled works, "direct" otherwise known as *automatic* or *involuntary* or *passive* writing is when the hand of the writer is used as an "instrument" by a spirit and the consciousness of the writer may or may not dissociate into a trance state. This form of automatic writing is essentially a form of spirit possession. An example of this was given in Chapter Nine with the case of the Ploughkeepsie Seer and the boy whose brother had died.

This method, which is often referred to as psychography, is perhaps better known as "automatic writing" according to Myers' definition. Psychography can mean "dictated" by spirit, but automatic writing is markedly different because it is carried out without the conscious control of the writer whose consciousness may or may not have dissociated into a trance state and could be completely unaware of what is being written. Eye-witness testimony by third parties of this kind of automatic writing is probably the best kind of evidence of its authenticity. Because of its extraordinary nature in comparison with the other two forms above, it is potentially a better candidate for scientific scrutiny. Taking all these factors into account, let us now examine the writings of the Brazilian author Francisco Xavier as a possible candidate for scientific validation.

Francisco Cândido Xavier (1910-2002) affectionately known as "Chico" was an uneducated layman, born into a poor family in Brazil where it is claimed he wrote over four hundred books that were received from the spirit realm through automatic writing.

It is claimed that André Luiz is the spirit of a doctor of medicine who died in 1934 and dictated several volumes of work to Xavier from the spirit realm where he is purported to carry on with his work.

Now let us examine the scientific evidence that may enable us to validate the source and content of what Xavier was writing. In 1945 Xavier wrote several references to the pineal gland in *Missionaries of the Light*.

An interesting characteristic of *Missionaries of the Light* is that it is written as a narrative in the first person. The narrator is the spirit of the deceased Dr André Luiz as he explains his education by his teacher, Alexandre, in the spirit world.

Chapter One of *Missionaries*, entitled *The Psychographer* introduces the reader to a spirit realm where Dr Luiz is under instruction about mediumship and the interaction between spirits and the living. In the second chapter entitled, *The Pineal Gland*, Luiz describes what he sees as a spirit communicates through a medium:

> While Caixto was communicating using the medium's body as an instrument, I employed the magnetic energies furnished to me by Alexandre and concentrated all my attention on the medium. The more I observed the brain's details, the more I marveled at the increasing light the pineal gland was emitting. The tiny gland had become a radiating nucleus and its rays formed a lotus flower of sublime petals around it.

Writing in a narrative has its benefits if the work is directed towards a wide populist audience, which Xavier's books undoubtedly were. Scholars of literature are aware of the advantages of presenting fact as fiction for entertainment, as we have already seen in Chapter One of this book where I examined the work of Michael Cuneo and William Blatty. The disadvantage of course is that it could be seen as pure fiction and used as dramatic entertainment, as Blatty's work, *The Exorcist* will testify.

When fact is embellished for entertainment then the message in the truth of the original fact is lost. However, can the same be said of the works of Xavier? It would appear not, as Brazilian scholars and scientists have discovered through rigorous research.

The Pineal Gland and Spirit Communication

Significance has been attached to the pineal gland in numerous different cultures and beliefs. For example, French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) declared that the pineal gland was the seat of the soul in his *Passions of the Soul* completed in 1649.

Several spiritual philosophies contain the notion of an inner third eye that is related to the *aina* chakra and the pineal gland, and to which is attributed significance in mystical awakening or enlightenment, clairvoyant perception, and higher states of consciousness. This idea occurs historically in ancient central and East Asia, and also in contemporary occult theories relating to yoga, Theosophy, Hinduism, Pagan religions, and New-Age spiritual philosophies. Rationalists argue that there is no clinical evidence to support these assertions, and it may have been these objections that a group of Brazilian researchers wanted to challenge with recent scientific evidence.

Brazilian Spiritism has advanced the role of the pineal gland, and the objective of one study in particular was to compile information on the pineal gland drawing on the books of Francisco Xavier written through psychography and to carry out a critical analysis of their scientific bases by comparing them against evidence in the current scientific literature.

These researchers found that the psychography of Chico Xavier provided valuable information about the pineal gland that was later discovered and shown to be validated by science.

The disembodied spirit of André Luiz provided us with precise and accurate information about the pineal gland in 1945 which was overlooked,

or unknown to science at that time. Corroboration with what Luiz conveyed to us through the channeled writings of Chico Zavier has been increasingly found by scientists.

By bringing together current scientific observations with those of André Luiz we may conclude that the pineal gland is a crystalline-like structure that receives information from the soul and from the subtle bodies and "perispirit". [17] In other words the pineal gland could be seen as the "antenna" that connects the body with the spirit. The writings of Xavier may be seen as a bridge between the ancient Vedas and modern science, particularly as Xavier was not educated in either the Vedas or scientific discourse.

The most important message conveyed by these observations is that a deceased doctor of medicine who died in 1934 conveyed scientific knowledge through automatic writing about a specific organ in the human body at a time (1945) when science did not possesses such knowledge. Recent corroboration of such information may be seen as evidence that a spirit realm does exist and that those who dwell there have scientific knowledge that we are yet to discover. Acknowledgement of this relationship between the deceased and the living can go a long way to explain what inspiration really is.

Neuroimaging and Psychography

Now, in the twenty-first century, we have the additional development of brain imaging technology that enables us to measure the brain activity of mediums whilst in the act of automatic writing.

A preliminary study in 2012 investigated psychography for potential associations with specific alterations in cerebral activity.

The study examined ten healthy psychographers – five less expert mediums and five with substantial experience, ranging from 15 to 47 years of automatic writing and 2 to 18 psychographies per month. The study used single photon emission computed tomography (SPET) to scan brain activity as subjects were writing, in both dissociative trance and non-trance states. The complexity of the original written content was analysed for each individual and for the sample as a whole. The experienced psychographers showed lower levels of activity in the left culmen, left hippocampus, left inferior occipital gyrus, left anterior cingulate, right superior temporal gyrus and right precentral-gyrus during psychography compared to their normal

(non-trance) writing. The average complexity scores for the automatically written content were higher than those for control writing, for both the whole sample and for experienced mediums. The fact that subjects produced complex content in a trance state suggests that they were not merely relaxed, but in a dissociative, passive and receptive state. Simple relaxation therefore seemed an unlikely explanation for the under-activation of brain areas specifically related to the cognitive processing being carried out.

The decreased activity in the temporal cortex, precentral gyrus, hippocampus and anterior cingulate in experienced mediums also supports their subjective reports that they were not aware of the content they were writing during psychography, which involved ethical or spiritual matters and the importance of joining science with spirituality. The mediums reported that texts were written from communicating spirits and did not attribute them to their own brains, which is also a plausible hypothesis.

Note that the study of psychography above, unlike those of other religious practices such as meditation or prayer, found diminished activity in attentional networks during alleged spiritual communication. Similar findings occurred during the experience of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) in which individuals claim access to a spiritual realm.

The authors of these studies advise that further studies are required to fill out details of the nature as well as differentiation of religious and spiritual practices, and their neural correlates.

Although volunteers in this study reported having auditory hallucinations, personality changes and other dissociative behaviours, structured clinical interviews excluded psychiatric disorders. As was noted in their study, despite several similarities with brain activation reported for schizophrenic patients, none of the mediums had any mental disorder. These findings underscore the importance of future research using precise criteria to distinguish healthy from pathological dissociative expressions within the scope of mediumship.

In their conclusions, the authors of the above studies suggest that they cover some key mind-brain debates that are concerned with neuro-functional studies of religious experiences, as well as certain methodological challenges and limitations that they consider may be of use when formulating neuro-functional designs for research on mediumship and spiritual phenomena. Most neuroimaging studies of religious experiences do not focus

specifically on “spiritual communication”, but this issue may be significantly relevant for science.

The authors conclude that their preliminary results suggest continuing and extending this fruitful line of research. Since comprehension of neural correlates involved in mediumship is still at an early stage, they emphasize that these findings call for further replication and explanatory hypotheses. They further recommend that this new line of research go hand in hand with formulations of hypotheses to cover a wide range of phenomena involved in mediumship and alleged spiritual manifestations. They therefore propose that further studies with neuroimaging methods should focus on mediumship, and they call on their neuroscientist colleagues to collaborate and invest in this important line of research in order to improve the comprehension of consciousness, spiritual experiences, and their relations with the brain.

Chapter Thirteen

Psychiatry and Possession

Two significant trends have been developing concurrently in both psychiatry and clinical psychology for several years that strongly suggest a paradigm shift towards a broader conceptual framework.

One of these trends is the application and testing of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) that is linked with Buddhist meditation for increasingly challenging mental disorders. The approach of "Mindfulness" that was conceived by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1990 involves a method of guided meditation and strictly focussed attention that bears a strong resemblance to inductions for altered states of consciousness that were examined in Chapter Seven. The other trend is the growing awareness that mystical and spiritual experiences and religious beliefs have a relationship with mental health and emotional well-being. This second trend can be identified by the recent expansion of published works on spirituality by psychiatrists.

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise current psychiatric thinking within the conceptual framework of Myers in the diagnosis and treatment of a range of psychiatrically diagnosed mental disorders. In the first part of this chapter I will show how Myers' concept of the continuum is actually being applied by some researchers to mental health, and in the second part I shall demonstrate how the diagnosis of spirit influence, obsession, attachment or possession can be accommodated as possible differential diagnoses.

The Continuum of Mental and Emotional Disorders

On the continuum of mental and emotional disorders, anxiety and depression may be seen to represent the thin end of the wedge, progressing in seriousness and intensity through the neuroses to borderline personality disorder, then to DID and ultimately to schizophrenia at the extreme end of

the scale. The progression along this scale can be illustrated by a scale of ego-fragmentation conceived by Scharfetter in 2009.

Scharfetter's model enables us to identify how a progressively fragmented personality lends itself to an increasing potential for spirit influence. Scharfetter's "ego" refers to the "experienced identity" of the 100% healthy individual who enjoys a cohesive, integrated personality. Moving one step along the scale we find a cohesive, integrated personality that is comprised of many personality facets. Each of these facets represents an ego-part that has the potential to emerge according to circumstances in the immediate environment that are similar to those that prevailed at the time the ego-part responded to external stimuli. Neurotics and the majority of so-called "normal" people would fall into this category. Moving along the continuum to the centre represents a loosening of the cohesiveness of the sub-selves and the boundaries with the external environment and would include borderlines. The next step along the continuum describes a dismantled boundary between the fragmented self and the environment, thereby constituting dissociative identities. The fifth and final stage along the continuum denotes a complete fragmentation of the self with no boundary with the environment, such as schizophrenia.

The one significant factor that unites these categories on the continuum is *emotion*. In Chapter Ten I explored the concept of *sympathetic resonance* as the predominant factor that attracts spirit entities (positive and negative) to a person who is transmitting a powerful emotional energy. Scharfetter's model can be used to illustrate the progressive outcome of an inability to control powerful destructive emotions such as fear, anger and rage, etcetera. It is my contention that *Fear*, and the inability to deal with it in an appropriate way, is the primary cause of all non-organic mental illness and a highly significant factor in the attraction of negative spirit entities.

Adding support to the concept of the continuum, Richard Bentall challenges the proposition of Emil Kraepelin (1857-1926) who is the original architect of the modern psychiatry diagnostic system, that there are a number of discrete psychiatric disorders, each one associated with a distinct type of brain pathology. Bentall explains how the Kraepelinian model, which has evolved into the modern principle of arriving at a diagnosis based on the identification of presenting symptoms, has been maintained by mainstream psychiatric services. He argues that the maintenance of the diagnostic system based on symptomology is

misleading and has no scientific foundation, and the thrust of his argument is extremely well supported by empirical evidence from a diverse array of anthropological, social, psychological and biomedical research.

Bentall refers to research conducted at the Department of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, where Gordon Claridge recognised an apparent continuum (the schizotypal scale) from sanity to insanity that necessitates a revision of the Kraepelinian model of psychosis. Claridge suggests that there is a normal distribution across the population of the predisposition to develop psychosis, and that this predisposition can be triggered by environmental events such as psychological or physical traumas that could precipitate a psychotic breakdown.

In parallel with Claridge's schizotypal scale, Australian psychologist Michael Thalbourne in 2010 posits the concept of *transliminality and sensory sensitivity*.

Transliminality can be seen as a predisposition to dissociate or enter into trance states or altered states of consciousness on a progressive scale.
Elsewhere, hypnosis researcher Michael Heap and colleagues have collected a total of 13 different hypnotisability scales. These scales differ in the number of qualitative criteria used, and consequently produce differing results. The two scales most often used in laboratory research are the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale (SHSS) and the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (HGSHS). Extrapolating results from the collection of scales in order to arrive at a consensus of hypnotisability is extremely difficult, probably because hypnosis theorists are still unable to accurately define what hypnosis is. Nonetheless, it may be suggested that across the general population the ability to enter into a trance is evenly distributed with about 20% of the population having the ability to enter into a deep somnambulistic state. The simple diagram below may be used to illustrate these concepts.

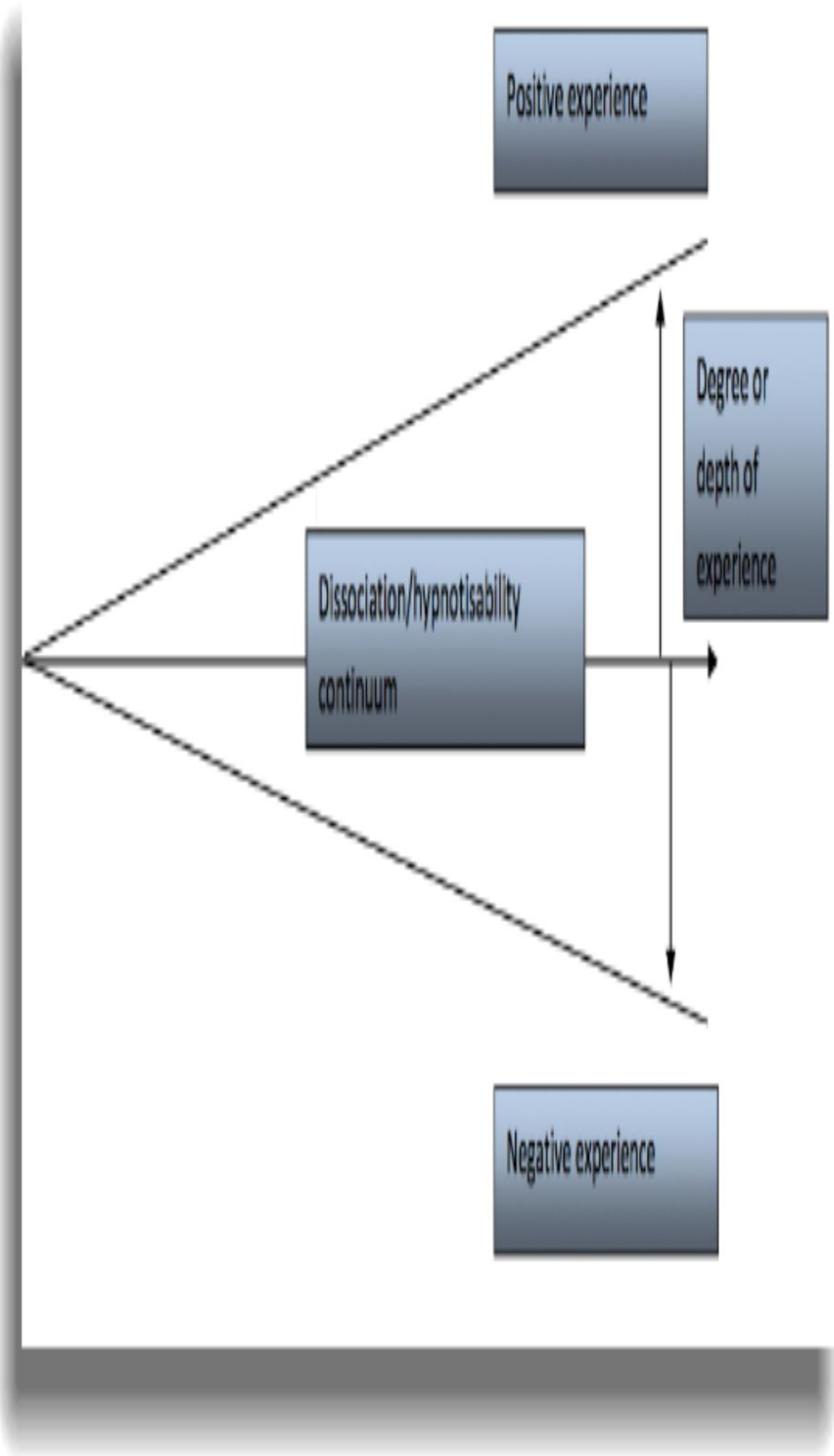
Positive experience
Degree or depth of experience
Dissociation/hypnotisability continuum
Negative experience

Figure 13-1 The Trance Continuum

On the continuum of trance experience, daydreaming represents the thin end of the wedge progressing through absorption to dissociative states, to complete dissociation with a full out-of-body experience or soul-loss. It may be hypothesised that there is a correspondence between Claridge's *schizotypal* scale, Thalbourne's *transliminality* scale and Heap's fuzzy and inconclusive *hypnotisability*. Any of these measures could hypothetically be used to identify vulnerability (the negative) or the potential ability (the positive) to spirit influence or possession.

A predisposition to positive or negative possession could be translated into the language of ego strength and integrity (integrated, cohesive) using Scharfetter's model or Claridge's schizotypal scale, together with the ability to enter an altered state of consciousness. A correlation between decreasing ego-state integrity with an increase in predisposition to enter trance would indicate vulnerability. Conversely an increase in ego-strength (a strong sense of self) with a decrease in hypnotisability would indicate an innate and non-conscious resistance to spirit influence. Naegeli-Osjord suggests that possession vulnerability is somewhat dependent on a combination of weakness of the ego and high suggestibility.

Putting it simply, a person with a strong sense of self (ego-strength) with a high propensity to enter an altered state (to dissociate) will have the psychological means to protect himself and control any influence from an external source, depending on their knowledge and experience. Examples of this type of personality are those who invite positive possession, such as Mercy Magbagbiola who invited the Holy Spirit, Alberto Villoldo who undertakes shamanic journeying, and mediums who permit themselves to be used as instruments of communication for deceased relatives or other beings in the spirit realm.

Conversely those persons with a fragmented personality or a very weak sense of self, and who have a high propensity to enter an altered state or to dissociate, will not have the means to protect themselves and exercise control over spirits that are attracted to them.

On a scale of 0 – 100, if you are one of those people at the 0-20 end of the continuum then you will not be influenced by suggestion or be aware of anything of a discarnate spiritual nature. You will not have mystical experiences and due to your analytical mind you will be rational in your

explanations as to why others do have such experiences. You may also attribute your flashes of creative inspiration to your own subconscious rather than to any spirit guidance. However, as we move along the continuum then things do change. We become progressively more vulnerable and more susceptible to the power of suggestion, to creative or magical thinking, and to mystical experiences and spirit influence, and we may experience unexplained synchronicities. As we approach 80-100 at the extreme end of the continuum, those with a robust sense of self will be mediumistic and able to control the influence on them from the spirit world. These people will be spiritualist mediums or shaman. But those with a fragmented sense of self, or ego-fragmentation according to Scharfetter's model, will be subject to psychosis and negative spirit possession.

This is where the art and skill of the psychiatrist is tested. It is not sufficient to simply diagnose personality disorders, dissociative identity disorder (DID) psychosis or schizophrenia, but to consider the very high probability that the cause is spiritual in nature, especially when the symptoms are accompanied by auditory voice intrusions or command hallucinations. It is here that we are able to distinguish the difference between a healthy minded spiritualist medium (the positive) and someone who is psychotic (the negative). In contrast, someone at the lower end of the scale, like a scientist or a psychiatrist with an analytical and rational mind, will be influenced by their own abilities and experience and will not be able to appreciate the experience of the medium or the psychotic. This is where the value of personal experience comes into the art of discernment and in the scientific validity of unusual phenomena.

All human experiences exist on a continuum that can be illustrated with the normal distribution curve as shown below:

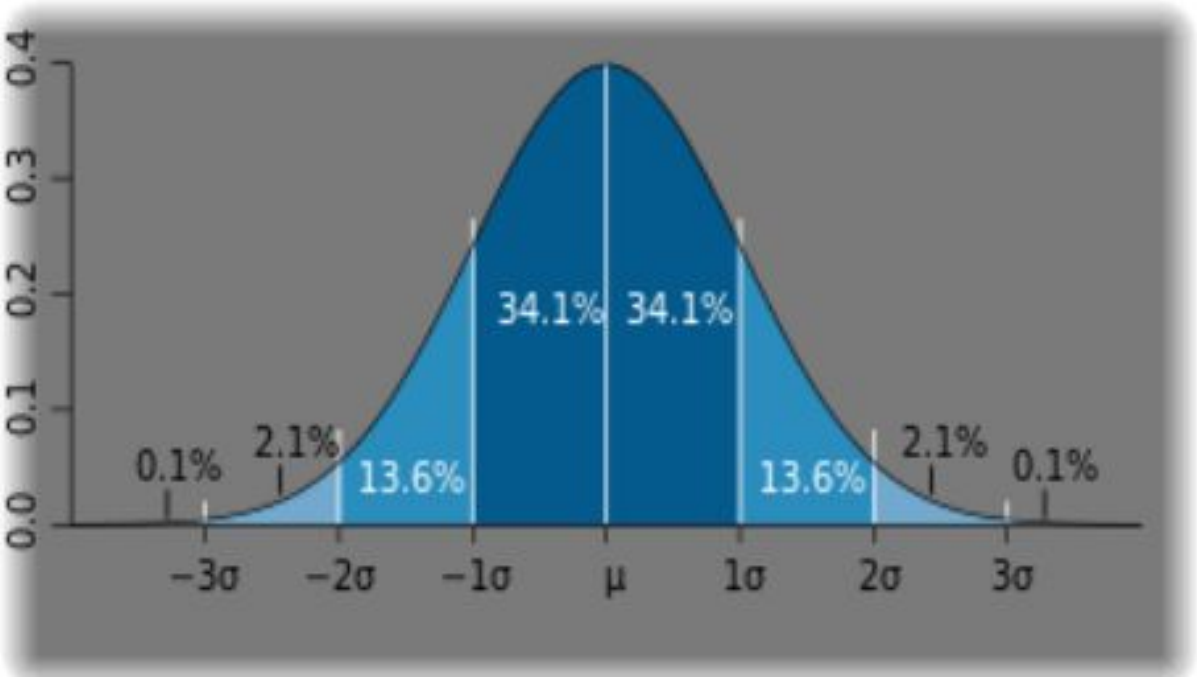

Figure 13-2 Normal Distribution Curve

Let us assume that at the extreme left of the curve are those who never experience spirit communication and at the other are those who do. In the middle are the majority of people within the population who do have some experiences of variable intensity and meaning.

The normal distribution curve, or the 0-100 wedge described above, can be used as simple models to illustrate the evolution of the expansion of human consciousness. At the 0-20 end of the spectrum and the extreme left of the distribution curve we may position mechanistic science, Newtonian physics and rational atheism. At the 80-100 end of the spectrum and the extreme right of the distribution curve we may place the transcendent, or alternate reality, or a pluralistic universe. In the centre we may place the advancement of physics into the domain of quantum theory and those mystical or religious experiences that prompt us to ask questions and seek explanations. This is my own simple logic and rational deduction to explain the movement of human consciousness towards a more holistic and balanced approach between science and spirituality for a greater understanding of so-called “anomalous” phenomena. As we progress in our evolution of scientific enquiry, so too does our consciousness expand so that we can accommodate such experiences into an expanded natural scientific framework.

Medical Diagnoses and Spirit Possession

Although “possession and trance disorders” are listed in the ICD-10 of the World Health Organisation, they are generally regarded as phenomena that are experienced primarily in tribal communities where shamanic practices are endorsed by the society, unless they are destructive in which case they are seen as pathological according to Western medical theories.

Table 13-3 Dissociative disorder classes in ICD-10 and DSM-IV

ICD-10 dissociative (conversion) disorders	DSM-IV dissociative disorders
Dissociative amnesia	Dissociative amnesia
Dissociative fugue	Dissociative fugue
Dissociative motor disorders	Dissociative identity disorder
Dissociative convulsions	Depersonalization disorder
Dissociative anaesthesia and sensory loss	Dissociative disorder not otherwise specified
Dissociative stupor	
Possession and trance disorders	
Mixed dissociative (conversion) disorders	
Other dissociative (conversion) disorders	
Dissociative (conversion) disorder, unspecified	

In the above table "possession and trance disorders" are shown in relation to similar dissociative diagnoses in ICD-10 and DSM-IV. This table of dissociative disorders gives the impression of a series of discrete mental diagnoses that are related to each other by the term "dissociation". The study of dissociative disorders has become hugely fashionable in recent years, particularly in the USA and Europe, with many dedicated clinicians and researchers attending much time and resources to its treatment and study. A review of all the literature on dissociation reveals that no one is considering the possibility that dissociation is connected with genuine spirit possession despite the fact that Possession and Trance Disorders is listed in ICD-10.

The experience of "being taken over" has at various times been attributable to a variety of influences including "being inspired, or to the id, the Muses, Platonic manias, unconscious forces, Apollo or other gods, Jungian complexes, right hemisphere processes, or various types of spiritual forces" and we are informed that research conducted by Bourguignon found

that in a review of 488 societies 74% of people believed that spiritual forces can affect the personality, and 52% maintained that one's own personality can be "replaced by that of another".

Marjolein van Duijl, reported a case of a 33 year-old patient in Uganda who experienced an alternate personality by regular attacks exhibiting aggressive behaviour and animal-like noises whenever her family made preparation to go to church. The clinicians suspected that the behaviours were in response to preparation to go to church or to pray because of her suppressed anger towards her father who was a strict and authoritarian Christian who ruined her life through his strict and unyielding principles, and therefore attributable to severe stress and serious inter-personal conflict. The client agreed to anger management counselling and medication to control her anxiety in anticipation of an attack.

The clinicians attribute the behaviour of the alternate personality to stress and repressed inter-personal conflict and prescribed the use of medication to subdue potential outward manifestation of aggressive behaviour. But what if their diagnosis was wrong? What if this woman was not suffering from repressed emotion due to stress and conflict? What if this woman was literally possessed by a spirit that finds church and prayer anathema? It would appear that the secular training of the clinician naturally assumes that real possession is out of the question and medication and anger management are the answer. But this was Uganda, and where was the shaman to give a differential diagnosis and solution more appropriate to the culture, or the church minister to affect deliverance from the offending spirit? Was the diagnosis the result of Western culture-bound preconceived ideas about the nature of spirit possession and an assumption that these kinds of experience are pathological?

In a case such as this, a spirit release practitioner would make no assumptions based upon preconceived ideas, but would engage the secondary personality through the client in hypnosis, or by direct contact through mediumship.

Possession/Trance Phenomena and Dissociation

In their structural definition of dissociative disorders Holmes and colleagues have highlighted confusion with the meaning of the term *dissociation* in the literature and, following a brief review of

conceptualizations, proposed that a distinction should be made between two separate processes: *detachment* and *compartmentalization*.

They define *detachment* as an altered state of consciousness characterized by a sense of separation from the self (depersonalization) or the world (derealisation). In addition, according to Holmes et al, some authors have suggested that it may have a distinct biological/physiological basis. They suggest that it appears to arise from intense fear, and in some circumstances it may develop into a chronic or recurrent condition, perhaps with environmental or intra-personal triggers. It is this relationship with fear that is of interest, and supports the trauma based theory of dissociation proposed by Pierre Janet.

Compartmentalization, on the other hand, is characterized by an inability to deliberately control actions or cognitive processes that would normally be amenable to such control. In this phenomenon, the affected processes or information remain intact within the cognitive system despite being inaccessible; in this sense, they may be regarded as being compartmentalized. In this approach, *detachment* and *compartmentalization* differ in kind rather than degree. It is with these conceptual differences in mind that Holmes et al advocate different approaches in the clinical interventions related to the different forms of dissociation. So what would these different approaches be? How do you treat someone whose dissociation is detachment and how do you treat someone who is compartmentalised? Clues to the answers to these questions could be provided by the early hypotheses offered by James, Myers and Janet and with more contemporary spirit release practice.

Further to Holmes and colleagues' categorisation, Cardena et al take *experiential-detachment* to mean an alteration in consciousness wherein "disconnection-disengagement from the self or the environment is experienced as out of body, depersonalisation, derealisation. Psychological *compartmentalisation* refers to non-integrated psychological processes or systems that should normally be integrated, but can be subdivided into three categories of phenomena:

a) Lack of awareness of current or previous information that should ordinarily be integrated.
b) The coexistence of separate mental systems that should normally be integrated into consciousness, memory or identity.

c) On-going behaviour that contradicts introspective verbal reporting.

Possession Trance Phenomena (PTPs) according to Cardena et al mostly involve the first two categories; absence of reflective awareness (trance) and lack of integration of different identities (spirit possession). In an earlier paper Cardena declared that PTP phenomena have both pathological and non-pathological expressions and that in certain cultures, what could be seen as pathological in Western psychology, is in fact a socially acceptable phenomenon.

These conceptual differences between *detachment* and *compartmentalisation* could be compared with the two hypotheses presented between Myers and James on one hand, and Janet on the other. Dissociation by *detachment* could be due to the fissiparous nature of consciousness according to Myers and the shamanic tradition where soul parts are fractionated and escape from the psychic energy field of ordinary consciousness. *Compartmentalisation* fits with Janet's theory where the dissociation is within the unconscious of the subject or, according to Myers and James, the influences of other entities that impinge on the subject (spirit possession). Should these conceptualisations actually fit with therapeutic practice then the therapeutic interventions would be entirely different for each type of case. In the case of *detachment,* should it actually mean soul loss then the lost soul parts need to be recovered and integrated into the whole person which is sympathetic with shamanic practice. In the case of subjective unconscious *compartmentalisation* the treatment would still be integration but with soul parts that are not lost. If the *compartmentalisation* is due to the influence of other entities then spirit release methods would need to be applied. However, due to the scientific framework of modern scientific thinking the latter is not considered as a viable differential diagnosis by traditional medicine and psychotherapy.

It is my contention that *all* of the above dissociative-disorder diagnoses that are listed in ICD-10 and DSM-IV could be indications that spirit influence should be seriously considered as a differential or compound diagnosis.

It is by analysing cases of multiple personality from past literature, that we are able to gain a different perspective altogether and arrive at alternative explanations.

Full possession of an individual's mind and body by an external intelligence is rare, very dramatic, and extremely challenging for our belief systems to accept and for our mechanistic medical science to acknowledge. At the other end of the continuum, spirit influence by subtle thoughts and ideas is probably experienced by most people. But, even creative geniuses, whose gifts are given by a spiritual source, are more likely to attribute their creativity to themselves. The evidence to support the hypothesis that there is an afterlife, and the case for a non-material spirit realm, has been reviewed in the previous two chapters. If this evidence has any validity it becomes increasingly difficult to view mental illness and emotional problems from a purely psychiatric perspective. The psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, or psychotherapist with experience of patients reporting or discovering subtle spirit influences or attachments are better placed to recognise the signs immediately and initiate one of those investigation methods used by SRT practitioners that are described in the introduction to this book.

In researching the modern psychiatric literature for references to the conceptual framework of Frederic Myers I have discovered a parallel in the literature from Brazil on the work of Allan Kardec.

On close inspection of Kardec's work there are clear parallels between his and Myers' respective conceptual frameworks and scientific methods. Kardec coined the term "Spiritism" in order to distinguish it from the "Spiritualism" of England and North America, where it is still practiced to this day in spiritualist churches as a branch of Christianity, and remains largely unrecognised by science as a healing modality. In contrast, the application of Kardec's Spiritism to healing has been steadily integrated into mainstream medicine in Brazil since the 1930s.

There is a huge gulf between Myers' and Kardec's respective concepts being accepted or rejected by institutionalised medicine. In Myers' case his work has been ignored by mainstream psychology, and it is only now that he is being rediscovered by modern psychologists such as Edward Kelly and colleagues. In complete contrast however, Allan Kardec has been accepted as the pioneer of a mental health healing modality that is widely accepted and practiced in many parts of the world, and in South America in particular. In his attempts to educate Western European medical practitioners, the Swiss psychiatrist Hans Naegeli-Osjord reinforces his argument on the relationship between mental illness and spirit possession with a quotation from C.G. Jung:

The statement by C.G. Jung may be appropriate here: ‘The ideas or moral laws of deity are a constant in the human soul which can not be exterminated. Therefore, every psychologist who is not dazzled by narrow-minded, arrogant interpretations must deal with these facts’.

Chapter Fourteen

A Revised Scientific Framework

The primary objective of this book has been to present a revised scientific framework to explain spirit possession in all its diverse forms across all societies and cultures. This revised framework is grounded in the expanded conceptual framework of F.W.H. Myers. What has emerged is acknowledgement of an evolving paradigm shift in scientific enquiry that is centred in the need to understand and explain human consciousness. However, there remains a tension between the established frameworks of the mechanistic sciences of physics and chemistry and the humanistic sciences such as anthropology, psychology and sociology. What is interesting is that it has been the so-called "mechanistic" sciences of physics and engineering that have revealed the sub-stratum of connections in human consciousness and not psychology as one might expect. It has been those scientists engaged in high-energy physics, space and laser technology that have discovered the mystical connection to their work and recognised what the ancient Eastern philosophers have been teaching for millennia.

However, for the die-hard sceptic there remains the need to reject all psychic and psi phenomena according to the existing mechanistic framework of Newtonian physics. This maintains the tension between mainstream psychology in its need to cling to its neurological and genetically-based theoretical framework on one hand, and the requirement to expand the framework in order to accommodate psi (or spiritual) phenomena on the other.

The history of psychological healing teaches us that what is first observed as a mystery, because existing knowledge cannot explain it, leads to the development of new theories and the discovery of previously unrealised concepts that can accommodate the mystery into expanded scientific frameworks. It was on this very point that Pierre Janet remarked:

> From time to time it has been the fashion to laugh at miracles and to deny that they occur. This is absurd, for we are surrounded by miracles; our existence is a perpetual miracle; every science has begun by the study of miracles.

One such so-called "miracle" - *telepathy* has become integrated into our language, but persists in being the subject of controversy in scientific and academic circles and the subject of belief or non-belief in the subjective opinions of the general public in Western society. The same can be said with specific regard to the phenomenon of spirit possession. However, research from a range of disconnected fields of enquiry strongly suggests that the two are inextricably connected, and this connection *demands* to be investigated further.

This book represents an investigative journey, from a modern societal consensus of disbelief in spirit possession that is reinforced by social science observations and a mechanistic view of human experience, to my discovery of the scientific validation of telepathic hypnosis by Frederic Myers, Pierre Janet, Leonid Vasiliev and other twentieth-century scientists.

Although telepathic hypnosis cannot be explained by mainstream physics, it remains an observable fact, and it is my contention that it is at the heart of possession theory. Pioneers in treating spirit attachments with remote (telepathic) methods from a clinical, holistic perspective have presented their experiences and those of their patients against a societal and scientific consensus of disbelief and incredulity. But in researching this book I have discovered that the conceptual framework of Frederic Myers, and not forgetting that of Allan Kardec, together with recent discoveries in quantum theory, collectively provide a valid and acceptable scientific framework that does accommodate such experiences.

At the heart of this journey are those problems that are grounded in the philosophical arguments surrounding scientific frameworks, or "how do we know what we think we know?" Elizabeth Sahtouris in her essay published in 2007 on the emergent paradigm shift in the study of consciousness states: "The only way to truly know that something has happened or exists is to have direct experience of it". The importance of this statement is a recurring theme throughout my research, and as a consequence, we arrive at a revised scientific framework for SRT according to the conceptual framework of

Frederic Myers that he developed during more than twenty years of investigation into the theory that consciousness survives the death of the physical body.

Many problems have been encountered along the way, such as the validity of eye-witness testimony, interpretations of what constitutes a hallucination, the so-called "hard problem" of the mind-body link, the power of beliefs, suggestion and expectation in placebo, the vulnerability of certain groups of individuals to external spirit entities, and the ontological status of such entities. Questions have been raised regarding the authenticity of an afterlife, of mystical and religious experiences, interpretations of the terms conscious, unconscious and subconscious, and their related constituents in models of mind. We have discovered parallels in shamanic journeying with Jung's archetypes and active imagination. And we have discovered that there are connections between mystical states of consciousness, dissociation, hypnosis, animal magnetism, meditation, mediumship, shamanic journeying and prayer.

In Myers' conceptual framework, he identified a methodological parallelism between mechanistic theories of cerebral automatism as an automatic neurological reaction to the environment, and the concept of volition as a conscious determinant of response. The mechanistic perspective of modern psychology maintains this methodological parallelism to this day in maintaining neurological explanations for all psychological phenomena when the findings of research into psi phenomena indicate otherwise.

In order to resolve this parallelism, Myers' *tertium quid* approach accepted both perspectives and brought them together into a cohesive whole that espoused an expanded naturalism. Movements in the paradigm shift in modern science are sure signs that an expanded naturalism is in the making, more than one hundred years after Myers envisioned it. Myers can therefore be acknowledged as a true scientific visionary, and his contribution to the science of psychology need no longer be ignored or underestimated.

Myers' preferred experimental method involved the use of the artificially-induced altered state of consciousness that resembled the observed experiences of somnambulists and hysterics - hypnosis. Modern hypnosis theorists, rather than adhere to their theories of suggestion and social-conformity, would do well to introduce Myers' concept of the greater *Subliminal Self* into their model of mind, and make strenuous attempts to

bypass the power of suggestion and expectation in order to arrive at more unexpected findings from their explorations.

Using the example of the stage hypnotist, I have asserted that possession of the mind and body of a willing subject is easily demonstrated for entertainment and amusement. But with the introduction of Myers' assertion that telepathic hypnosis is a scientifically observable fact, we arrive at a perfectly plausible explanation for spirit possession where either a discarnate spirit, or the conscious will of another living person, can use the mental and physiological infrastructure of the organism for its own purposes, and thereby influence thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In his desire to entertain, the stage hypnotist clearly demonstrates the concept of possession.

Myers' findings that the living and the spirits of the deceased, can present themselves to another person can be acknowledged as credible, and that visions need not be considered as hallucinations, but apparitions with veridical origins. His experiments with conscious projection of the self to another add credulity to this phenomenon, and recent research findings in *remote viewing* are testimony to the reality of the projection of consciousness beyond the limitations of time and space.

In addition to the research of the Stanford Institute on behalf of the United States Department of Defense and that conducted by the Soviets during the cold-war, ordinary people going about their normal every-day lives do experience such phenomena as out-of-body experiences, astral travelling and bi-location. But these experiences are rarely reported, as Myers noted in his research. Modern collections of such experiences are held by the Alister Hardy Trust and the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) that give testimony to such experiences, but due to their rarity in being reported they are considered to be rare occurrences. The truth is that they are not rare at all, just under-reported due to the fear of disbelief or derision.

Reported cases of spirit possession or attachment are also rare in contrast with the actual incidence in the real world of human experience. The real danger of reporting such experiences is being labelled as mad or deluded, and that danger is just as real for the physician as for the patient. The real madness is in the consensus denial that these experiences are to be taken seriously.

Myers did not elucidate his conceptual framework as clearly and concisely as one would like, and this may have contributed to modern psychology's difficulty in acknowledging it. However, in summary, Myers' conceptual framework can be presented as follows:

- All human experiences exist on a natural continuum.
- Nothing is 'para'-normal – all is normal.
- The term 'supernatural' is meaningless. Everything experienced is a manifestation of the natural universe.
- The physical sciences are limited by the constraints of three dimensions and are therefore not able to accommodate all natural phenomena. Our knowledge of natural laws is therefore incomplete.
- The human being is a spirit entity that occupies, possesses and uses a physical body for the purposes of experiencing an Earth life.
- There is a non-corporeal spirit world.
- Consciousness continues to survive after the death of the body.
- The mind has many levels, is porous and fragmentary, and is not brain dependent.
- Human beings can communicate mind-to-mind by the first spirit law of telepathy.
- The spirits of the deceased and spirit guides can communicate with the living through telepathy.
- Persons can project their consciousness beyond time and space to other persons.
- The mind has the ability to control the body through an effort of will.
- Other persons or discarnate spirit entities can influence, interfere with or control a person's thoughts, feelings, physiology or behaviour from a distance with or without their knowledge.
- The deceased can feel that they are still alive even though they have left the body.
- The deceased can continue to try to carry out their objective despite having no body.
- Vulnerability in the living can attract disembodied earthbound spirits of the deceased.
- Spirit entities are unconsciously attracted to energetic vibrational frequencies of the living.
- Psychotic symptoms could be attributable to spirit influences.

- To arrive at a diagnosis of multiple personality on the basis of the existence of identifiably different occupying intelligences and to reject the possibility of externally or spiritually originating intelligences may be misleading.

Myers used three essential criteria to test the validity of spiritual phenomena:

1. The phenomenon was witnessed by, or affected more than one person.
2. Information conveyed would be true and independently verifiable.
3. The information was previously unknown to the recipient.

Further support for Myers' framework is provided by the healing philosophy that was channelled through hundreds of mediums to French scientist Hippolyte Rivail (pen name Allan Kardec) which has been incorporated with success into the institutionalised medicine of Brazil.

Brazilian institutionalised medicine therefore leads the way in the use of psychic mediums for the resolution of mental problems by the release of spirit entities.

Modern Research on the Efficacy of Spirit Release Practice

The complementary use of traditional religious healers by persons in psychotic states has been documented for a number of societies including Puerto Rico, Africa, Brazil and Mexico. However, the impact of these treatment modalities on the recognition and treatment of psychotic symptoms, and on the course of schizophrenia, has rarely been systematically examined. An exception is cited here:

In their study of the *Recognition and Treatment of Psychotic Symptoms by Spiritists Compared to Mental Health Professionals,* Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino expand on psychosocial and cultural perspectives on the experience and expression of psychotic symptoms and the treatment of schizophrenia by exploring how Spiritist healers in Latin America treat persons with severe mental illness.

In a survey of 53 persons in Puerto Rico who were diagnosed with schizophrenia according to DSM-IIIR criteria in three community mental health clinics, it was found that 22 of these patients contacted Spiritist healers. The ways that the Spiritist healers recognised and treated symptoms

were systematically observed and the healing sessions were tape recorded. Cases treated by Spiritists were then compared to conventional mental health treatment (provided by a staff of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health technicians) of similarly diagnosed patients. Perceptual differences between mental health providers and Spiritists are summarised below.

Spiritual Aetiology

The greatest conceptual difference between the Spiritist healers and mental health professionals is that the Spiritist healers do not identify a category of experience labelled "hallucination/delusions". In this study, persons diagnosed with schizophrenia were recognised by Spiritist mediums as "spirit-obsessed" and unable to control the effect of the spirit on their bodies and behaviour.

For Spiritists there is a non-material reality that is inhabited by spirits who may manifest at any time and may interfere with a person's perception of reality. They also believe that the spirit of the real person may be absent when an invading spirit takes possession of the body. Therefore, distortions of reality expressed by some patients are not attributed to themselves, but instead to spirit invaders. Reality distortions are not perceived as false beliefs or unreal perceptions, because the patient's own spirit is not present.

Brazilian psychiatrist Dr Inácio Ferreira began to incorporate Spiritism into institutionalised medicine in Brazil as far back as the 1930s and wrote several books presenting evidence for spiritual aetiology in many cases of insanity and for the efficacy of Spiritist treatments. Some of his books have been translated from Portuguese into Spanish, but his work has not been published in English. In contrast, in the English speaking world there is no scientific research into the efficacy of SRT, and it is primarily for this reason that this book is presented.

Myers' Expanded Naturalism

Applying Myers' concept of the continuum to spirit possession in Chapter Three I examined examples of cases of possession at the extreme end of the continuum where eye-witness testimony challenges the known laws of physics and biology. I suggested in that chapter that there remain undiscovered laws that can explain how the human body can be

manipulated by external forces, and that the sciences of biology, quantum physics and a broader psychology will eventually arrive at a more complete naturalism. In Chapter Three the problem of discernment between mental illness and spirit possession was introduced with the example of Peck's case of "Jersey" who was originally diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. I criticised Peck's inability to use his skill as a hypnotist to enter into a more fruitful dialogue with Jersey's possessing spirits. This case is representative of how psychiatrists and religious exorcists can cooperate and still get it wrong through a lack of knowledge and experience. Where the cases presented in Chapter Three challenge eye-witness testimony and known physical laws, they also question the adequacy of the medical scientific framework in general. It was therefore important to examine the relationship between beliefs and knowledge by asking how modern psychology questions and measures beliefs in the paranormal.

In his introduction to *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* Myers makes his position very clear with regard to metaphysics and religious belief:

> My discussion, I may say at once, will avoid metaphysics as carefully as it will avoid theology. For somewhat similar reasons I do not desire to introduce the philosophical opinions which have been held by various thinkers in the past, nor myself to speculate on matters lying beyond the possible field of objective proof.

It was Myers' intention to focus on dimensions of objective reality and subjective experience and to avoid the contamination of proof by what people believed. It is therefore in keeping with Myers' single-minded objectivity that I have applied his methods and theories to the scientific framework of Spirit Release Therapy in this book.

Myers' research gives testimony that it matters not what people believe when it comes to the phenomena associated with spirit possession and spirit attachment. It is by using the scientific methods of Myers that it is possible to bypass the deceptions and illusions of the conscious rational mind and to search beneath expectation and suggestion to uncover what is causative in a variety of mysterious human experiences – including spirit possession.

Modern researchers tend to prefer the use of psychometric instruments in their attempts to understand and explain belief systems, and my criticism of this method is that they appeal only to the cognitive abilities of the

conscious awareness. Complementary to psychometric methods is the method used by Myers to access levels of mind beyond the threshold, and the use of the altered state of consciousness (hypnosis) is recommended in all research into psychic phenomena and relative belief systems.

It has been my own experience that the greatest difficulty in researching answers to questions of a spiritual nature lies in the determination of modern science to treat the concept of Spirit as a taboo. The success of research institutions, such as The Rhine Research Centre and the Institute of Noetic Sciences, into the nature of consciousness and its mysteries, is to assign the theoretical construct of *psi* as an alternative to Spirit. Similarly, in medicine, *placebo* and the power of suggestion, belief and expectation are assigned to explain the power of the Spirit in the spontaneous remission of disease. But medical science does not know how placebo works, or indeed how suggestion works. Scholars in the study of anthropology and theology have a strong tendency to treat the concept of spirit as a cultural curiosity and the subject of belief systems that are different from our own in the West.

In mainstream psychology the nature of spirit is completely bypassed in favour of research into why people believe in psychic phenomena instead of what spirit is. Correspondingly, hypnosis research is still trying to explain hypnotic phenomena with neuro-physiology whilst ignoring the possibility that it is a significant sign-post to the workings of the Spirit and a gateway into other realms of existence. It is as if the work of Myers on telepathic hypnosis never happened. This is a big mistake which needs to be corrected. For science to continue to ignore these important issues is a form of denial and we all know that denial is a characteristic of mental illness. Denial keeps us stuck and prevents us from moving on and discovering more about the real nature of consciousness.

This book reverts back to the original objective of the Society for Psychical Research, and that is, “to conduct investigations without prejudice or presuppositions of any kind” and builds upon the conceptual framework of Frederic Myers that he developed in accordance with those principles. And so we need to go back to Myers and start again with the same open-minded approach that he had.

An Integrated Psychology

Myers demonstrated that psychology is the science of a holistic being that incorporates a subliminal consciousness that exists beyond the threshold of normal conscious awareness. The interaction between the subliminal mind and the physical brain is more complex than simply an expression of nervous system responses, and he demonstrated that both the intangible mind and the organic brain are fundamental and causative. An integrated psychology therefore investigates the spiritual aspects of human consciousness and its relationship with the material world. With particular regard to spirit possession Myers' conceptual framework accommodates an interaction between discarnate minds with those that are incarnate, not just in pathology but in the everyday experiences of normal healthy people. On the continuum of human experience SRT practitioners have encountered the influence of discarnate minds on the living at every level. Even those who have no belief in the transcendent or in spirits of any kind can have at their elbow a discarnate spirit that is attached to them for some reason or other, just as Jung commented in his memoirs, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.

On-going Research

The potential for future research into the influence of the spirit world on our daily lives is absolutely staggering when we consider the huge volume of written work that is claimed to have been channelled or inspired by Spirit. If only our universities, medical schools and scientific institutions would permit the freedoms of creative inspiration in the formulation of hypotheses that take into account the possibility of a spirit world. Perhaps then we would be able to question the validity of channelled and spiritually inspired written works, in addition to conducting controlled studies of automatic writing.

The emerging practice of Spirit Release Therapy that has been initiated by twentieth-century Western psychiatrists together with the Spiritism of Brazil collectively bridge the gap between the two dogmas of medicine and religion with practical and compassionate methodologies that are grounded in knowledge gained through experience. Therefore, it remains for medical schools and psychiatric institutions to carry the baton initiated by Brazilian scientists to test the efficacy of SRT in the English-speaking world of

medicine. In addition, observations of SRT practitioners that mind-probe hypnosis has diagnostic benefits ought to be subjected to scientific scrutiny.

For the student of religious experience and theology questions remain regarding the teachings of institutionalised religion in relation to the experiences of mystics and prophets and the religious and spiritual experiences of ordinary people. What are the similarities in the theologies between the great world religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism with specific regard to spirit possession and influence? Can the teachings of the ancient texts such as the *Rig Veda*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the Buddhist *Dīgha Nikāya* and the Yoga *Sutras* provide us with comparisons and explanations that are compatible with the observations and interpretations of modern mystics?

Similarly, are there consistencies and common factors in traditional religions such as Wicca, Paganism and Shamanism? We can extend this line of reasoning by asking the same question of Spiritualism, Spiritism, Christian Science, Theosophy, Scientology, and so-called New-Age spirituality in all their diversity.

The inter-changeability of different words in attempts to identify, or assign, an unknown variable to observable phenomena could be an indication that the unknown variable has common characteristics. But the different names assigned to the unknown variable may be a reflection of the belief systems of the observer. Whether the unknown variable is assigned the name of animal magnetism, or psi, or Divine Light or Spirit is an indication of the belief system of the observer, but in essence they are all the same - only the assigned name is different.

All of these questions can be viewed through the conceptual framework of Frederic Myers which does not argue against religious teaching or healing rituals, but enhances our understanding of them. For the religious exorcist in particular, Myers' model of mind, which is reinforced and supported by the experiences of SRT practitioners and their patients, provides insights into layers of subtle spirit influences that demand attention. In addition to possession by the demonic; possession and attachment by the earthbound souls of the deceased are of primary importance, and the discernment process needs to explore the relationship between mental illness, spiritual crisis and the possibility of earthbound

spirit influence. Myers chose to bypass discussion on religious belief systems and preferred to test hypotheses that went beyond beliefs.

If all areas of human behaviour can be researched within this revised scientific framework then the possibilities for new discoveries are endless. For example; when people commit the heinous crimes of serial murder, rape and paedophilia we may pose the question: “Are these people simply evil, are they mad, or are they possessed?” In all areas of emotional, mental and physical function we may pose the question: “What external influences are at work here?” This question can be applied just as easily to the person who suffers from gender dysphoria, Tourette’s syndrome, depression, PTSD, anxiety and fear or anger for no apparent reason.

As a practitioner of Spirit Release Therapy since 2003 I have encountered individuals who have been affected by non-human dark force entities, earthbound human souls, self-created thought forms and dissociated sub-personalities; all at the same time.

No two cases are the same, and for psychiatry to try to fit such cases into a diagnostic system is futile, and any attempt at healing is doomed to failure. Only when the Spirit of the individual and all those other spirits that affect him or her are recognised and treated appropriately, will any healing be effective. Giving a diagnosis on the observable symptoms serves no useful purpose, but investigating the *cause* of those symptoms and treating the cause with appropriate methods will produce the desired results.

This book provides the scientific framework for such methods.

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